

# **Translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa**

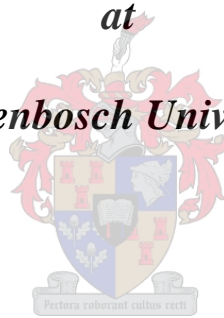
by

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## Declaration

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## Abstract

This study investigates the feasibility of translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa. The Qur'an has not yet been translated into isiXhosa and Xhosa-speaking Muslims who are unable to read and understand Arabic are facing a void in practising their faith. Xhosa-speaking Muslims also pray in a language that they do not understand and this robs them of close contact with the Almighty and as a result, the number of Muslims who speak isiXhosa does not increase.

Through literature reviews and interviews it has been found that there is a great need for Muslims, who are target language speakers, to be able to communicate with Allah in their mother tongue, isiXhosa. Furthermore the study indicated that isiXhosa-speaking Muslims who, years ago, have converted to Islam are still struggling with the Arabic language. This study also investigates the view that the Arabic Qur'an cannot be translated into other languages because the Qur'an is the word of God delivered in Arabic to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This view is not based upon the assumption that an Arabic Qur'an is untranslatable, but rather on the views of some Arabic scholars.

There are also fears that meaning will be lost when the Qur'an is translated. However, the study showed that when translating the Qur'an, one is not seeking to translate only the meaning but also the message of the Qur'an. A conclusion was reached that all human beings, thus all nations and languages, are created by Allah. Therefore, it is acceptable for human beings to communicate and listen to Allah's message in their own language.

This study suggests that culture and language are inseparable and that both must be taken into consideration when translating. The Qur'an has already been translated into other languages and the translations are used without any problems, for example into English and KiSwahili. The Qur'an is available in other African languages as well. Therefore, this study suggests that the Qur'an can be translated into isiXhosa. The linguistic challenges can be addressed in the target language by a body consisting of translators of laypersons, translation experts and linguists specialising in both Xhosa and Arabic. However, the study shows that the title of the Xhosa Qur'an should indicate that the Qur'an is a translated text.

## I-Abstrakthi

Olu phando luphande ukuba nako kokuguqulelwa esiXhoseni kweKurani yesi-Arabhu. Uphando lubangelwe kukuba kungekho Kurani iguqulelwe esiXhoseni okwangoku kwaye kuqwalaseleke ukuba aMaslamsi athetha isiXhosa, angayiqondiyo nangaluvayo ulwimi lwesi-Arabhu, nokuba afundile okanye awafundanga, ajongene nomngeni wokuba nokungoneliseki kwinkolo yabo. Inyaniso yokuba kufuneka athandaze ngolwimi angaluqondiyo, ibenza bangakwazi ukufikelela kuQamata kwaye ngenxa yoko, inani laMaslamsi alandi kwiilokishi apho aMaslamsi athetha isiXhosa.

Uphando, ngokuphonononga iincwadi nangokubamba udliwano-ndlebe, lufumanise ukuba kukhona isikhalo esikhulu esisuka kuMaslamsi athetha ulwimi okujoliswe kulo ukuze akwazi ukunxibelelana noQamata ngolwimi aluqonda ngcono, olusisiXhosa. Uphando lubonise ukuba aMaslamsi athetha isiXhosa awaguqukelanga kwinkolo ye-Islamu kutsha nje kwaye umzabalazo wolwimi kudala uqhubeka. Uphando luxoxe ngoluvo lokuba iKurani yolwimi lwesi-Arabhu ayinakuze iguqulelwe kwezinye iilwimi njengoko iKurani ililizwi likaQamata eladluliswa ngolwimi lwesi-Arabhu kuMprofeti uMuhammada (uxolo malube naye). Uphando lungqine ukuba uluvo lokuba iKurani yolwimi lwesi-Arabhu ayinakuguqulelwa kwezinye iilwimi alusekelwanga ekungaguqulweni kombhalo kodwa kwizimvo zezifundiswa zama-Arabhu. Uphando kananjalo luxoxe ngomba wokuba uloyiko lokuguqulela iKurani yolwimi lwesi-Arabhu kwezinye iilwimi lubangelwa yinyaniso yokuba xa kuguqulelwa, kuye kubekho ukulahleka nokulahlekwa kwentsingiselo pha naphaya. Uphando slubonise ukuba xa kuguqulelwa iKurani, ubani akasobe efuna ukuguqulela intsingiselo kodwa umyalezo weKurani. Uphando lufikelele kwisigqibo sokuba abantu bazizidalwa zikaQamata kwaye badalwe bazizizwe ngezizwe nokuba bathethe iilwimi ngeelwimi. Ngoko ke, kwamkelekile ukuba abantu banxibelelane ze bamamele umyalelo kaQamata kulwimi olulolwabo. Uphando lufikelela esigqibeni sokuba inkcubeko nolwimi azohlukani kwaye ngexesha lokuguqulela, zombini (inkcubeko nolwimi) kufuneka zibe ziyaqwalaselwa. Uphando lubonise ukuba iKurani yaguqulelwa kwezinye iilwimi kwaye iinguqulelo zisetyenziswa ngaphandle kwengxaki. Imizekelo yeenguqulelo ziiKurani kwisiNgesi nakwisiSwahili. Uphando lubonise kananjalo ukuba zikhona ezinye iinguqulelo zeKurani kwiilwimi zase-Afrika. Ngoko ke, uphando lufikelele kwisigqibo sokuba iKurani ingaguqulelwa kulwimi lwesiXhosa kwaye nayiphina imingeni yenzululwazi yolwimi engathi ivele ingasonjululwa kulwimi ekujoliswe kulo luphando, ukuba kunokuthi umntu ongathi aguqulele ingabi nguye nawuphi na umntu ontetho isisiXhosa owazi ulwimi lwesi-Arabhu kwaye eliSlamsi, koko ibe yibhodi yokuguqulela eya kuthi ibe nabantu abohlukeneyo ngokwamanqanaba abo, ukusuka kulowo ungafundanga, iincutshe zokuguqulela, iingcali zolwimi kwiilwimi zombini. Nangona kunjalo, kuphando kuye kwaqwalaselwa ukuba iKurani eguqulelweyo ayinakubizwa ngokuba yiKurani kodwa mayibizwe ngegama elibonisa nelicebisa ukuba umbhalo lowo yinguqulelo.



## Opsomming

Die studie ondersoek die vertaling van die Arabiese Koran na Xhosa. Die Koran is nie tans in Xhosa beskikbaar nie en Xhosa-sprekende Moslems wat nie Arabies magtig is nie, ervaar dit as 'n struikelblok in die beoefening van hul geloof. Xhosa-sprekende Moslems bid ook in Arabies, selfs al verstaan hulle nie die taal nie. Dit beroof hulle van noue kontak met die Almagtige en veroorsaak dat die Moslem-geloof nie by Xhosa-sprekers in townships inslag vind nie.

Aan die hand van 'n literatuurstudie en onderhoude is bevind dat daar 'n groot behoefte onder Xhosa-sprekende Moslems is om in hul moedertaal met Allah te kommunikeer. Die studie het ook getoon dat Xhosa-sprekende Moslems wat hulle reeds jare gelede tot die Islam bekeer het, steeds met die Arabiese taal worstel. Die studie ondersoek ook die siening dat die Koran nie vertaal mag word nie, omdat die Woord van God in Arabies aan die profeet Mohammed (mag vrede oor hom heers) geopenbaar is. Dié siening berus nie op die aanname dat die Koran onvertaalbaar is nie, maar eerder op die uitsprake van Arabiese geleerdes.

Daar word ook gevrees dat die Koran se betekenis verlore sal gaan tydens die vertaalproses. Die studie toon egter dat die vertaling van die Koran sal fokus op die oordrag van die boodskap en nie net die betekenis van woorde nie. Die gevolgtrekking van die ondersoek is dat alle mense, en dus alle volke en tale, deur Allah geskep is. Dit is dus aanvaarbaar vir mense om Allah se boodskap in hul eie taal te kommunikeer en aan te hoor.

Die studie kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat taal en kultuur onskiedbaar is en dat albei in ag geneem moet word tydens die vertaalproses. Die Koran is reeds in ander tale vertaal en word sonder enige probleme gebruik, byvoorbeeld in Engels en Swahili. Die Koran is ook in ander Afrika-tale beskikbaar. Die studie bevind dus dat die Koran ook in Xhosa vertaal kan word. Die taalkundige uitdagings kan in die doeltaal hanteer word deur 'n vertaalspan wat bestaan uit leke, opgeleide vertalers en taalkundiges wat spesialiseer in Xhosa en Arabies. Die studie toon egter dat die titel van die Xhosa Koran moet aandui dat dit 'n vertaalde teks is.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background**

This chapter begins with a brief outline of the history of the Islamic faith. Specific attention is given to the history of Islam in Africa and the cultural implications the embracing of Islam had on Africans. To contextualise the focus of the study, namely the Xhosa relationship with Islam, the cultural implications and the language issues thereof, a comparative analysis of Africa's various ethnic groups and their experiences with Islam, is briefly discussed.

However, before going into the history of Islam, it is necessary to define the term "Islam".

#### **1.2 The definition of Islam**

Islam, according to Doi (1984:i) "is a religion and a way of life based on the commandment of Allah contained in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad." It is defined as "submission to the will of God" and a Muslim is being defined as someone who submits to the will of Allah (Esposito 1992:29). This submission implies that "[e]very Muslim is under an obligation to fashion his entire life in accordance with the dictates of the Qur'an and the Sunnah" (Doi 1984:1). The Qur'an is regarded by Muslims as the word of God, and "sunnah" is an Arabic term which refers to Prophet Muhammad's traditions (his actions and sayings/statements) that serve as Muhammad's normative model for Muslims (Esposito 1992:7).

Having given a definition of Islam, the next point is a general but brief history of Islam, with particular reference to Africa.

#### **1.3 Aim of the study**

The main purpose of the study will be to investigate the feasibility of translating the Arabic Qur'an directly into isiXhosa.

## 1.4 Objectives of the study

The objectives of conducting this study are as follows:

- To investigate the method/s used in translating the sample of isiXhosa verses of the Qur'an currently available;
- To establish the steps to be taken to provide another translation, using a different method;
- To obtain the views of Xhosa people on the translation samples;
- To design a model that can be followed for the translation as a whole; and
- To investigate whether the the Qur'an may be translated.

## 1.5 A brief history of Islam with a particular reference to Africa

Islam is a faith practised across the world by various nationalities. The Qur'an, the guide book and sacred text for Muslims, was revealed in Arabic to Muhammad, an Arab prophet in 610 AD in Mecca (Haykal 1976:73). The message of Islam, delivered through Muhammad, was the proclamation of "one true God", rejecting the polytheism of Arabia and denouncing social injustice (Esposito 1992:27). When Muhammad delivered this message, the leaders of his ethnic group, the Quraysh, who were polytheists, protested, saying that Islam was an insult to the religion of their forefathers (Lings 1983:52–53). The Quraysh began to physically attack the Muslims until Muhammad instructed some of his followers to seek refuge in an African country then known as Abyssinia – the modern day Ethiopia (Lings 1983:80; Nyang 1993:231). The flight to Abyssinia marked the first emigration of the followers of Muhammad and the first contact between Muhammad's Islam and those living on the African continent.

In South Africa Islam is traced to the year 1658 (Tayob 1995:39). However, there is no clarity about when indigenous Africans, in particular the Xhosas of South Africa, first embraced the faith. Available records on the history of Xhosa Muslims in the Western Cape, suggest that Xhosa Muslims were already in the fold of Islam in 1960 (Tayob 1995:86). In that year (1960) an organisation called the Nyanga Muslim Association was formed in Nyanga, a historically black township in Cape Town. (Shell 2000:342; Tayob 1995:86).

According to a study conducted by Sesanti (2009:38) on Xhosa Muslims in the Eastern Cape, the Xhosas of the Eastern Cape embraced Islam in the early 1970s. A number of factors influenced this move. The first was the contact between Indian and Malay businessmen and a few Xhosa men. Later, young men influenced by the Black Consciousness philosophy, rejected white values along with Christianity which they associated with the apartheid government, and embraced Islam (Sesanti 2009:38). In his study, Sesanti (2009:38) also established that the Xhosa Muslims in the Eastern Cape were attracted to Islam by some cultural similarities, such as the funeral rites common between Xhosa culture and Islam. In the olden days Xhosas used to bury their deceased on the very same day of death, or at least within three days of death – the same way Muslims do (Sesanti 2009:38-39). Significantly, in her study on the Western Cape Xhosa Muslims, Lee (2001:70) established that her subjects were attracted to the Muslim funeral rites that resonated with traditional Xhosa funeral rites. This combination of Islam and African cultural practices is not a phenomenon unique to South Africa.

Davidson (1994:52) observes that in East Africa “we find another synthesis of indigenous African culture and Islam, just as in the West African Sahel.” Diouf (1998:4) observes that in contrast to the arrival of Islam in North Africa brought by the invading Arabs, the spread of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa followed a mostly peaceful and unobtrusive path. Diouf (1998:4) further notes that some features of traditional African religions and customs such as the ritual immolation of animals, circumcision, polygamy, communal prayers, divination, and amulet-making, that are also present in Islam, facilitated conversion to Islam to such an extent that “Africans themselves considered Islam an African religion.”

While acknowledging the African contribution in the development and growth of Islam, Kamalu (1992:19) strongly argues that Islam was used by Arab slave traders and soldiers in an attempt not only to subjugate Africans economically and politically, but to mould the African cultural personality into a passive rather than resistant form and subject to Arab cultural domination. Kamalu, (1992:20–21) asks: “But what forms of African religion require that traditional African beliefs are denounced as heathen or that one should give up one’s African name and take on a...Muslim one?”

Kamalu’s question regarding “Islamic” or “Muslim” names – an issue to be addressed later – should be seen as concern about the cultural implications the embracing of Islam has for Africans. Rosander (1997:10) has for instance observed a “trend of Islamization [which]

goes hand in hand with Arabization, the emphasis on the need for learning Arabic properly to be able to read not only religious texts in Arabic.” A clear picture of the Islamisation/Arabisation trend is drawn by Hunwick (1997:51):

Already there are considerable cadres of younger West African Muslim men trained in Arabic-speaking countries who constitute an alternative elite. Being Arabophone, they are not surprisingly also Arabophile and, like early Anglophone Christians who adopted European dress and attitudes along with their religion, these Muslims tend to favour *Arab* dress and social norms, shunning what they see as the *paganism* of local ways.

While this may be the case, it can also be noted that consciousness of Africanness in the House of Islam is a historical factor, one of its distinct features being the use of animal skins as prayer rugs by West African Muslims (Diouf 1998:63). The use of Arabic as a language of liturgy in Islam and some resistance to the translation of the Qur'an from Arabic into other languages has created some difficulties for those who do not have a command of the language.

### **1.6 Translation of the Qur'an and the challenges associated with it**

Ever since the emergence of Islam, the Qur'an – along with Islamic liturgies – has been recited in Arabic. While the Qur'an has been translated into English and many other languages over the years, this was not an easy task.. Noting that Western people find the Qur'an a difficult book, largely because of the problematic translation, Armstrong (1999:173) says that:

Arabic is particularly difficult to translate: even ordinary literature and the mundane utterances of politicians frequently sound stilted and alien when translated into English, for example, and this is doubly true of the Koran, which is written in dense and highly allusive, elliptical speech.

However, the translation of the Qur'an has enabled interested readers of English, who do not have a proficiency in reading and comprehending Quranic Arabic, to greatly enrich their understanding of the meaning and the incomparable beauty and perfection of the Glorious

Qur'an (Al Akhira 1989:ix). Shackle (2005:19), notes that translating sacred texts should not be tackled lightly.

Rosander (1997:15) observes that among Muslims, "[e]specially in Africa translations of the Qur'an are a controversial issue". Rosander further observes that the singing of religious songs in Wolof, a Senegalese language, was condemned by Arabic-oriented Muslims. The Arabic-oriented Muslims hold the view that the Qur'an "should not be translated, since God, through the angel Gabriel, conveyed the divine word in Arabic" (Rosander 1997:15). Reasoning that translation is of necessity also an interpretation, according to the Arabic-oriented Muslims it could therefore, be argued that a translated version of the Quran is no longer the proper word of God (Rosander 1997:15).

The translation of the Qur'an from Arabic into Kiswahili in East Africa caused tension and conflict since some Muslims argued that there is no other language as extensive as the Arabic language and that to translate the Qur'an into a foreign language has no meaning at all (Lacunza-Balda 1993:235). Those in favour of translating the Qur'an reasoned that neither God nor Muhammad had ever said that the Qur'an could not be translated and that a valid argument against translation could be the lack of command of the Arabic language of the translator (Lacunza-Balda 1993:236). Those in favour of translation of the Qur'an acknowledged the importance of understanding Arabic in order to access the Qur'an in its original form, but this was not an absolute necessity for East African Muslims because "Islam does not want colonialism in religion ... Arabic is not necessary" (Lacunza-Balda 1997:112).

Among some Muslims there exists a belief that "[a]t the end of the world, Arabic will be the only language spoken in heaven" (Holtendahl & Djingui 1997:268). On this score, Sanneh (1994:36) observes that to such Muslims, God came to be associated with its (the Qur'an's) speech, so that the very sounds of the language are believed to originate in heaven. Muslims like Cameroon's Alhaji Ibrahim Goni in Holtendahl & Djingui, (1997:268), believe that:

God gave the Arabs of Saudi Arabia many privileges. Islam came into being in their country. The man most loved by God and for whom He created the world, the prophet Muhammad, is a son of Saudi Arabia. The Qur'an is written in Arabic, the language in which every Muslim says his prayers.

As a result of this understanding, Holtendahl and Djingui (1997:270) further point out that Alhaji Ibrahim Goni believes that because Islam was delivered in the land of the Arabs, all

this makes a fine example of the Arabs, and that this example should be followed (even though in some instances it is difficult to emulate them. Goni believes that all the Arabs are wise and learned because they worship God the way He wishes them to, they practise Islam the way it should be practised, and because they live in the spiritual world. Though Goni is not opposed to the translation of the Quran, the identification of the Arabic language with Islam's glorious past is a contributing factor to the resistance against the translation of the Qur'an (Sanneh 1994:36). Through research it has been established that this posed a serious challenge for many Muslims whose vernacular is not Arabic and who thus recited the prayers without understanding the meaning thereof (Sesanti 2009:33; Tayob 1995:111; Lacunza-Balda 1993:233).

In a study undertaken among African Muslim women in Uitenhage, Eastern Cape, Sesanti (2009:52) established that while those who have a command of Arabic experienced empowerment, those who do not understand the language felt disempowered and marginalised. This happened to such an extent that one interviewee noted that to her the sound of the Arabic language was like “rumblings” (Sesanti 2009:52). A Muslim leader in East Africa also referred to the tendency of reciting the Qur'an without understanding the Arabic language as “parroting” (Lacunza-Balda 1993:233). The fact that Arabic is used amongst Xhosa speaking Muslims who do not understand what was being said, had and still has a negative impact on the growth of Islam among Xhosa speakers.

From experience, non-Muslims perceive Xhosa speaking Muslims as people who turned their backs away from their culture and embraced foreign cultures. This is rightly so because language and culture go hand in hand. It has also been noted by Lacunza-Balda (1993:232) that Sheikh Al-Amin feared that cultural and linguistic changes would eventually cause a decrease in Islamic consciousness.

It is suggested that for Muslims the Qur'an is the word of God, its theological message therefore transcends the boundaries of the Arab peninsula and carries a universal message to all mankind regardless of their language or race and thus, the message of the Qur'an cannot be disseminated without translating its language into other target languages (Abdul-Raof 2005:162). The suggestion by the author (Abdul-Raof 2005:162) is qualified by Al Akhira's (1989:ix) findings that “it has enabled readers of English ... their understanding of the meaning and the incomparable beauty and perfection of the Glorious Qur'an.” Long (2005:2),



notes that when the people of the Earth began to build a tower to consolidate their power, God surprised this activity by causing confusion, making them all speak different languages.

These statements imply that people were created in different nations to speak different languages. It was also noted that for more than forty years since Xhosa Muslims embraced Islam there is still no Xhosa translation of the Qur'an. Former Muslim Youth Movement president and Xhosa speaker, Fuzile Tahir Sitoto, says that this is due to the unavailability of people who can translate the Qur'an into isiXhosa in such a way that the spirit and the rhythm of the Arabic version of the Qur'an is not lost. It is against this background that this study was done.

The theological message of the Qur'an as referred to by Abdul-Raof needs to reach the target audience of this study, being Xhosa-speaking Muslims so as to make the "meaning of the Glorious Qur'an to be understandable" to them. Nida also suggests that the Scriptures carry important messages and that nothing could be gained by obscuring the message (de Waard & Nida 1986:10). It is argued that there is a need to shake off the yoke of religious colonialism that had been imposed by the Arabic language (Lacunza-Balda 1993:233).

How could this be achieved without translating the Qur'an? If it can be translated in English, will there be any difficulty in translating it into isiXhosa? It is also envisaged that the translation will not lose the spirit and the rhythm of the Arabic version of the Qur'an. Translation can be the tool to decolonise Xhosa speaking Muslims religiously.

## **1.7 Problem statement**

This research intends to investigate the feasibility of translating the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa and has been initiated by the fact that there are Muslims who are Xhosa speaking and yet there is no Qur'an in isiXhosa.. This is further qualified by beliefs that the Arabic Qur'an cannot be translated into other languages but should rather be called interpretations of the Qur'an as is noted by Abdul-Raof (2005:162) who argues that for Muslim scholars, the Qur'an is untranslatable since it is a linguistic miracle with transcendental meanings that cannot be captured fully by human faculty.

## **1.8 Data Collection Techniques**

Data for this study were collected through journal articles on translation, and various websites and textbooks. The other technique used for collecting data was by conducting interviews

and by making observations. These interviews were recorded using an audio-recorder whereafter they were transcribed. Of the six interviews, one was conducted via email.

### **1.9 The significance of the study**

This study will hopefully help that the whole of the Qur'an will someday be translated into isiXhosa. Once the Qur'an has been successfully translated from Arabic into isiXhosa, the target audience will be able to understand and better relate to the sacred texts thereof. Through translation the message of the Arabic Qur'an will thus be conveyed in the target language.

### **1.10 Research questions**

The study will address the following issues:

- What challenges will a translator face when translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa?
- How can these challenges be overcome?
- What are the strategies/approaches to be used when translating the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa?
- Is there something like "untranslatability"?
- Is it feasible to translate the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa?

### **1.11 Methodology**

First, three scholars with different approaches to translation will be discussed. These scholars are: 1) Nida, with formal equivalence versus functional equivalence, 2) Venuti, with domestication versus foreignisation and 3) Vermeer's skopos theory and the functionalist approach. These scholars and their respective strategies will be discussed in the chapter about literature review. It must be noted that the theories of Nida, Venuti and Vermeer will be emphasised although the views of other scholars and authors will also be referred to.

Secondly, a translation sample of the first chapter of the Qur'an will be investigated. The sample will be a word-for-word translation from Arabic into isiXhosa and will be used to determine whether the translation approach (word-for-word) is suitable for translating the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa. In doing so, the study will also establish whether the

sample translation will lose the spirit and the rhythm of the Arabic Qur'an. (The word-for-word translation of the sample from Arabic into isiXhosa is done by Sheik Fuzile Tahir Sitoto, who is a mother tongue speaker of isiXhosa and who has studied Arabic and Islam and is also a lecturer in Islamic Studies at the Durban University of Technology). The translation of the first chapter from the English Qur'an into isiXhosa is done by the researcher.

Thirdly, an analysis of three English translations of chapter one of the Qur'an and translations of other verses of the Qur'an into isiXhosa will be done. The three English translations are translations of Ali, Asad and Dawood. The isiXhosa verses from the Qur'an are based on a translation done by the Ahmaddiya. For this analysis, the same chapter, i.e. chapter one of the Qur'an will be used. The aim is to try and determine whether the current translated verses of the Qur'an into isiXhosa works as well as the existing English translations. The translation approach or approaches used in the different versions of the same chapter from the Qur'an will also be analysed to establish whether a different approach other than the word-for-word strategy was used. Furthermore a comparison between the word-for-word translation samples and the existing translations of the Qur'an will be made.

That being done and based upon the literature study as well as the findings of the analyses of the various translations; a translation model will be drawn up by the researcher. The model together with the translated samples from Arabic into English and isiXhosa, as well as from English into isiXhosa will be added as addenda.

The interviews conducted by the researcher can also be used with the translation model for future translations. These were conducted with six Muslim isiXhosa speakers who studied Arabic as a language and Islam as a religion. The reasons for conducting the interviews were to find out whether it is feasible to translate the Arabic Qur'an directly into isiXhosa and whether the word-for-word translation strategy is a suitable one when translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa.

The following questions were posed to the interviewees as individuals:

1. Is there a need to translate the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa?
2. What challenges would be faced if the Arabic Qur'an were to be directly translated into isiXhosa?

3. Is the message of the Arabic and English Qur'an effectively conveyed to Xhosa Muslims who do not have a command of either languages, especially Arabic?
4. Can the vocabulary of isiXhosa adequately accommodate the nuances of Arabic if the Arabic Qur'an could be directly translated into isiXhosa?
5. Looking at the existing samples of word-for-word translations of Arabic into isiXhosa you are provided with, would you say that it conveys the same message as conveyed in the Arabic Qur'an?

The questions posed above are dealt with in detail in paragraph 3.5 of the research.

### **1.12 Outline of chapters**

This study is divided into five chapters which are organised as follows:

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter and covers the background of the study, definition of Islam, aim and objectives of the study, a brief history of Islam with a particular reference to Africa, translation of the Qur'an and the challenges associated with it, problem statement, methodology, data collection techniques, the significance of the study and the outline of the chapters .

In Chapter 2 the literature review is discussed and the context of this study is indicated. Various scholars and their translation approaches and strategies are critically reviewed in order to establish which of the approaches and strategies will be the best to use when translating the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa. Thus, it contains discussions on Nida's formal and functional (dynamic) equivalences; Foreignisation versus domestication based on Venuti's comments; and the functionalist approach with a critical analysis of the skopos theory by Vermeer.

In Chapter 3 the word-for-word translation samples of the Qur'an into isiXhosa are analysed by comparing the translation of the same chapter of the Qur'an into different languages. This chapter will also highlight the advantages and disadvantages of translating a sacred text, for example by using a word-for-word translation strategy in the first chapter of the Qur'an. The interviews are dealt with in this chapter as part of the research to establish whether the word-for-word strategy is a suitable translation for this kind of genre. The feasibility of translating the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa will be determined in this chapter.

Chapter 4 is a discussion of the comparison between the translation samples and the English and isiXhosa translations of the first chapter of the Qur'an. The word-for-word translation samples will thus be compared to the existing translation of the Qur'an into isiXhosa. (It must be noted that for isiXhosa, the translation of the Qur'an's first chapter as well as random other verses were used.) The comparison is done to identify the most suitable translation strategy when translating the Qur'an from the source language into the target language.

In Chapter 5 the research questions are revisited and the best approach to use for translating the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa is identified and suggested. A conclusion is reached and a model of the best practice regarding approach, strategy and application by means of a real translation is designed for future translations of the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa.

### **1.13 Chapter Summary**

After giving a definition and a brief history of Islam, the researcher deals with the issues that inspired the idea of this inquiry and continues to discuss the research problem and questions. The research method and reasons therefore are also provided. The researcher then provides an outline of chapters and the chapter summary.

## Chapter 2

### Literature review

#### 2.1 Aim

In Chapter 1 of this study, the history of Islam was given. It was also noted that this study is an investigation of the feasibility of translating the Arabic Qur'an directly into isiXhosa. In this chapter the focus is on literature review. Literature review is defined as a critical summary and assessment of the range of the existing material dealing with knowledge and understanding in a given field (Baxter, Hughes & Tight 1996:110). It is also defined as a process of "reading whatever has been published that appears relevant to the research topic" (Bless & Higson-Smith 2000:19). In other words, the aim of this chapter is to discuss what different scholars say about translating a sacred text and what methods can be used in translating a sacred text.

It must be noted that the books and journal articles consulted did not yield anything about the translation of the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa per se, but relevant material to this study, with specific reference to the translation of the Qur'an into African languages, namely, Kiswahili and Pulaar, was gathered. Reference is also made to the spreading of the Qur'anic message in African languages such as Fulfude, Hausa and Fulani.

Before going further, and for contextual purposes it is necessary to make some observations about language. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1994:59) observes that a people's "language becomes the memory bank of their collective struggles over a period of time." Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993:92) further describes African languages as "our own mirrors in which to observe ourselves." These assertions give a clear indication of the close relationship between culture and language. It is suggested that, if a language were simply a nomenclature for a set of universal concepts, it would be easy to translate from one language to another (Baker 1992:10). Any comparison of two languages implies an examination of their mutual translatability and the widespread practice of interlingual communication, particularly translating activities, must be kept under constant scrutiny by linguistic science (Jakobson 1992:146).

The Arabic Qur'an will always be the historical and fundamental reference for Muslims, however most of the world's Muslim population has no direct access to the original language of the sacred Muslim scriptures, for they are unable to read or understand Arabic (Lacunza-Balda 1997:96).

Lacunza-Balda (1997:96) also notes that some Islamic scholars argue that importance must be placed on the memorisation of the text, and that such a point of view, nevertheless, will leave the issue of "understanding the Qur'an in order to apply it" clearly underrated. The character of the Qur'an as the verbatim speech of God, sets it apart (Graham 1985:29). It might also be conceived that the history of Islamic writings in Africa and the development thereof was directly linked to Arab civilisations – that is, the Middle East and North Africa (Harrow 2000:519).

The Qur'an is an independent and unique genre and this is realised through inseparable rhetorical and cohesive elements. This is also supported by the fact that the Qur'an is one of the most widely read texts internationally and that millions of Muslims are reading it on a daily basis, whether in its original Arabic version or in translated versions; yet no books are available to the reader, Arabic or non-Arabic, that provide a linguistic and rhetorical insight into the Qur'anic discourse (Abdul-Raof 2001:xiii).

Abdul-Raof (2001:1) suggests that, from a linguistic and applied translation perspective, no study is available that accounts for the problem of untranslatability of the Qur'an. The author (Abdul-Raof 2001:1) notes that the problem of untranslatability of the Qur'an has always been dealt with from theological and historical points of view. Thus, different strategies by various scholars will be critically evaluated to determine which of these will be suitable for translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa.

Translation is defined as a service: it serves an apparent need of human beings to transcend the world to which their own particular languages confine them; it mediates between languages, societies, and literatures; and it is through translations that linguistic and cultural barriers may be overcome (House 2009:3).

Therefore, this study will be paying attention to translation scholars that examine formal and functional equivalence strategies, domestication and foreignisation strategies, and the functionalist (skopos) approach.

Equivalence is chosen because it is a variable notion of how translation is connected to the foreign text (Venuti, 2000:5) and so links to Venuti's foreignisation. This is supported by the fact that Arabic is a foreign language to the target audience of the study and the text in the Arabic Qur'an is foreign to most Xhosa speaking Muslims.

Venuti (2000:5) further suggests that functionalism is a solution to a theoretical impasse and that autonomy is limited by the dominance of functionalism. As mentioned, the Arabic Qur'an serves as a guide for Muslims and as such it has a function and purpose. In the light hereof the approaches of skopos and functionalism were chosen as possibilities for use with the translation of the Qur'an from Arabic and into isiXhosa.

Similarly Nida's terminology is chosen because Nida dealt extensively with the translation of the Bible. Nida's concepts of formal and functional equivalence link with Venuti's foreignisation and domestication.

Functionalism is chosen as theory since it links with the role that culture plays in the translation process and since culture is very important for language groups like Arabic and isiXhosa, both cultures which are very removed from each other.

In addition to the strategies of the aforementioned scholars, the views of other scholars on this topic will also be dealt with, thus different publications in books and journal articles relevant to this study will be reviewed in this chapter.

## **2.2 Definition of Equivalence**

Equivalence is defined as a relationship of equal communicative value or function between a source and a target text or, on lower ranks, between words, phrases, sentences, syntactic structures, etc. of a source and target language (as in comparative linguistics) (Nord 1997a:138). Nord (1997a:35) adds that equivalence is a static, result-oriented concept describing a relationship of equal communicative value. Halverson (1997:209) suggests that equivalence is a relationship between two (or more) entities that can be described as one of likeness/sameness/similarity/equality, in terms of any of a number of potential qualities.

Equivalence is also suggested as a relative concept in several respects because on the one hand it is determined by historical-cultural conditions under which texts (source as well as target texts) are produced and received in the target culture, and on the other hand by a range of sometimes contradictory and scarcely reconcilable linguistic-textual and extra-linguistic



factors and conditions (Koller 1995:196). Dickens, Hervey and Higgins (2002:19) suggest that there are many different definitions of equivalence in translation and that they are either descriptive or prescriptive. The authors (Dickens, Hervey and Higgins 2002:19), further note that descriptively, equivalence denotes the relationship between source text features and target text features that are seen as directly corresponding to one another, regardless of the quality of the target text.

### **2.2.1 Formal Equivalence**

Leonardi (2000:4) cites Nida and Taber and adds that formal equivalence is referred to as formal correspondence. Leonardi (2000:4) further suggests that formal correspondence consists of a target language item which represents the closest equivalent of a source language word or phrase. It implies a formal orientation indicating that the linguistic forms, including the meaning in the receptor language, are to match as closely as possible the corresponding linguistic forms in the source language (House 2009:18). Formal equivalence means “that the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language” (Schäffner 2007:4). Nida (2000:156) notes that formal equivalence focuses attention on the meaning in the text itself, in both form and content and that in such a translation, one is concerned with such correspondence as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, as well as concept to concept.

According to De Waard & Nida (1986:37) a close formal correspondence in a receptor language frequently does not carry the correct message of the source text. When such a formal correspondence involves a serious obscurity in meaning, changes of form can and should be made (De Waard & Nida 1986:37–8). Nida (2000:161) notes that a formal equivalence translation is designed to reveal as much as possible of the form and content of the original message. It is suggested that there is a conflict between formal and functional equivalences and that the crucial problems of translation are often stated in terms of this conflict (de Waard & Nida 1986:36).

The formal equivalence suggests that a message in the receptor culture is constantly compared with the message in the source culture to determine standards of accuracy and correctness (Nida 2000:156). According to this statement applying formal equivalence in isolation when translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa will be problematic because of the differences between the source and the target culture. For instance, the Arabs use camels as a mode of transport and source of life, but some of the target audience only use horses and

donkeys for transport and cattle as a source of life. This could prove to be challenging to a translator using formal equivalence because s/he now has to find something equivalent that the target audience can relate to. Failing to do that, the translator will have to use a gloss translation, in which s/he attempts to reproduce as literally and meaningfully as possible the form and the content of the original text (Nida 2000:156).

In attempting to reproduce consistency in word usage, a formal equivalent translation usually aims at so-called concordance of terminology; that is, it always renders a particular term in the source language document by a corresponding term in the receptor document (Nida 2000:161), however it is not always possible to simply reproduce certain formal elements of the source language when using formal equivalence (Nida 2000:162).

### **2.2.2 Functional Equivalence**

Functional equivalence means thorough understanding of not only the message of the source text but also the manner in which the intended receptors of a text are likely to understand it in the receptor language (De Waard & Nida 1986:9). The term has been changed from dynamic equivalence to functional equivalence because the expression dynamic equivalence has often been misunderstood as referring to anything which might have special impact and appeal for receptors (De Waard & Nida 1986:vii-viii). De Waard and Nida (1986:viii) voice their hope that the use of the expression functional equivalence may serve to highlight the communicative functions of translating and so avoid misunderstanding. A translation of dynamic (functional) equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expression and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his/her own culture (Schäffner 2007:4).

It is suggested that all translating, whether in the foreign language classroom or in the rendering of the Scripture, should aim at the closest natural equivalent of the message in the source language (De Waard & Nida 1986:10-11). The authors (De Waard & Nida 1986:10-11) further note that not only should the equivalent content of the message be kept but, in so far as possible, the formal equivalence as well. The latter suggests that it will assist in keeping “the rhythm” of the Arabic Qur’an when translated into isiXhosa.

Barnwell (in Kirk 2005:92-3) notes that a good translation of a Bible must not be a ‘cultural translation’. Barnwell has in mind minority groups with little or no formal education and that translators should be reminded that they are not translating for the educated only but also for

the ordinary, less educated people in the community. This applies to the target audience who in this research are found to have no basic understanding of the Qur'an language, Arabic, to such an extent that the Arabic liturgies and the recital of the Qur'an in Arabic sounds more like "rumblings" (Sesanti 2009:52). It is also noted that fidelity cannot be found in literalness, but rather in adequate equivalence from one language to another (Schulte & Biguenet 1992:3).

The isiXhosa target audience wants to understand the purpose of the Qur'an to the Muslims. As stated by Graham (1985:31), it serves as a Reminder (*Dhikr*) and a Criterion (*Furq'an*) in human worship and action and it proclaims God's Word and keeps this Word constantly before its intended hearers. This being the case for the target audience of this research, the Qur'an serves to be a communication or message sent to Muslims by *Allah* (God). When communication takes place, there should be a source, a receptor and a message, to list but a few elements of communication.

According to De Waard & Nida (1986:11), it is suggested that the source of any spoken message is usually one person, but written documents may result from the collaboration of a number of different persons. In the case of the Arabic Qur'an, it is believed that the source is the angel Gabriel who was sent by the Almighty, *Allah* (God) to Muhammad (pbuh) to "Recite" (Lings 1983:42-43). Since Muhammad was an Arab the spoken language between Muhammad and the Angel was Arabic. As a result, during this era, the Qur'an was recited in Arabic. It has been noted by Graham (1985:31) that the earliest Muslim sources, in particular the Qur'an, made it clear that the original understanding of the Qur'an as a scripture was focused upon the oral character of the text.

Islam is a universal religion and as such the Islamic liturgies and the Qur'an that are recited and written in Arabic, can lead to "obscuring" *Allah's* message to the Muslim target receptors. It is noted that if a message is important (and this certainly is the claim for the Scriptures), nothing is to be gained by obscuring the message (De Waard & Nida, 1986:10).

This being said, the only way to make the Qur'an easily understood by the target receptors, is to translate it into the target language. It is suggested that the translation of the Scriptures must also be guided by the motivation of potential receptors (De Waard & Nida 1986:15). The expectations of receptors as to what a translation of the Scriptures should be like may also be an important factor in formulating the principles to guide a particular translation project (De Waard & Nida 1986:15).

De Waard & Nida (1986:22) suggest that one must persevere in translating something of the transcendent quality of the form of the source text to do justice to the primary religious language. It would be wrong to eliminate all of the “sublime obscurity” and try to rewrite the primary religious language in the style of a textbook on theology (De Waard & Nida 1986:22). In dealing with expressive forms of a language, it is important for the translator to identify with the creative expression of the source language by creating a form that is functionally equivalent in his/her own receptor language (De Waard & Nida 1986:25–26). It is further noted that the form will almost never be identical to the form of the source text, but since language functions are universal a functional equivalent can usually be produced (De Waard & Nida 1986:26).

The task of a translator as a secondary text producer is always a difficult one, since s/he is called upon to faithfully reproduce the message of the source text in a form that will effectively meet the needs and expectations of receptors whose background and experience are very different from the original receptors (De Waard & Nida 1986:14). The translator must be a person who can draw aside the curtains of linguistic and cultural differences so that people may clearly see the relevance of the original message (De Waard & Nida 1986:14).

The functional and formal equivalence differ. It is suggested that a translation which attempts to produce a dynamic (functional) rather than a formal equivalence is based upon “the principle of equivalent effect” (Nida 2000:156). With formal equivalence one is concerned that the message in the target language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language, whereas with the dynamic (functional) equivalence, one is not concerned with matching the receptor language message with the source language message, but rather with the dynamic (functional) relationship that should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original message and receptors (Nida 2000:156).

Since the Arabic Qur'an is a guide for Arab Muslims, the translated isiXhosa Qur'an should produce the same guidance for Xhosa Muslims. This suggests that in translating the Arabic Qur'an, the translator should avoid using a strategy that will “obscure” the message of the Qur'an. It is further noted that according to formal equivalence the translator must understand the cultural patterns and context of the source language in order to comprehend the message and then transfer these cultural patterns into the target text. However, functional equivalence aims at a complete naturalness of expression and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his/her own culture (Nida 2000:156).

This approach must be considered when confronted by the context of the different verses when they were revealed to the Prophet. A translator must have an understanding not only of the context but also the culture of the target language. For instance the Arab Muslims are familiar with palm trees that produce dates. These trees are not familiar to Xhosa Muslims but other trees and types of fruit are well known to them (Abdul-Raof 2001:155). Context issues like this should be taken into consideration when translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa.

With the dynamic (functional) equivalence the form of the original text is changed, however as long as such changes follow the rules of the contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation into the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithful, whereas formal correspondence distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language, and hence distorts the message, so as to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labour unduly hard in order to get to the message (Nida & Taber 2003:200–201). It is noted nevertheless, that between strict formal equivalence and complete dynamic (functional) equivalence, there are a number of intervening grades, representing various acceptable standards of literary translation (Nida 2000:157).

Nida's dynamic (functional) equivalence can be linked to Newmark's communicative translation because Nida's functional equivalence suggests that "... the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors," and that Newmark's communicative translation "attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained by the readers of the original." It is suggested that the communicative translation generally is likely to be smoother, simpler, clearer, more direct, more conventional, conforming to a particular register of language and tending to undertranslate (Newmark 1981:39). It is further suggested that in communicative translation, the only part of the meaning of the original which is rendered, is that which corresponds to the target language reader's understanding of the identical message (Newmark 1981:62). It is noted that communicative translation addresses itself solely to the second reader who does not anticipate difficulties and obscurities and would expect a generous transfer of foreign elements into his own culture and language only where necessary (Newmark 1981:39). This is mostly used for commercial translation and persuasive texts.

Newmark notes that a semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the

original (Newmark 1981:39). Semantic translation can be compared to Nida's formal correspondence since it "distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language..." A semantic translation tends to be more complex, more awkward, more detailed, more concentrated, and pursues the thought process rather than the intention of the transmitter (Newmark 1981:39). This applies to literary translation or whenever the author of the source text is of the utmost importance.

To apply semantic translation will be problematic when translating an Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa, because of the "contextual meaning" as the verses of the Qur'an were sent to Prophet Muhammad within different contexts. Since it is crucial that a translator must regard the target language as his/her's "first language", in this case an isiXhosa speaker, the translator's "second language" would be Arabic and these languages (Arabic and isiXhosa) differ extensively on a systematic level. Arabic is written and read from the right to the left whereas isiXhosa is written and read from the left the right. Adul-Raof (2001:68) implies that sacred texts like the Qur'an will always be characterised by non-equivalence due to the universal linguistic fact that languages differ from each other syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically.

It is noted that in both communicative and semantic translations, provided that the equivalent-effect is secured, the literal word-for-word translation is not only the best but also the only valid method of translation (Newmark 1981:39). This suggestion will however not work in translating an Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa and is dealt with in Chapters 3 and 4 of this research. It is suggested that because of Qur'anic expressions that have culture-bound overtones, neither semantic nor communicative translation will be able to convey the emotive Qur'anic meaning correctly, nor will it be able to generate the response required for the target language reader if he/she is not familiar with the source language (Abdul-Raof 2001:25 – 26).

With the differences in formal or semantic and functional or communicative equivalence, it is suggested that functional or communicative equivalence will be the best option to use when translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa. This is supported by the fact that the Qur'an carries a message from Allah and that the message should be "preserved" and not "distorted".

### 2.2.3 Summary

Abdul-Raof (2001:7) notes that a translator who aspires to achieve total lexical and/or textual equivalence is chasing a mirage, for total equivalence at any level of language is impossible but that relative equivalence at any level is possible. To support his statement, Abdul-Raof (2001:5–6) states that complete equivalence is not an achievable goal since there is no such thing as a formally or dynamically equivalent target language version of a source language text but he opts for the relative sense of the term which is the closest possible approximation to the source text. Thus, when it is said that two concepts are equivalent, it is not meant that they are identical but that there is commonality between them, and that they function in similar ways (House 2009:29).

Furthermore, languages can differ considerably from one another syntactically, semantically and pragmatically (Abdul-Raof, 2001:9). Thus, if equivalence is looked for at a linguistic level, there can be no equivalence between languages. Every human language has *ad hoc* linguistic mechanisms to express meaning and change of meaning not only through change of words but also through the change of word order (Abdul-Raof 2001:9). It is suggested by Newmark (1991:101) that since the concept of an ideal or perfect translation is illusory, the concept of translation equivalence can only be an approximation.

According to Abdul-Raof (2001:39) the effectiveness of the strategy to capture and penetrate the multiple semantic layers of the Qur'an is questionable. Abdul-Raof (2001:39) holds the view that attention must be paid to the approach that a translator adopts to relay to the target language audience the delicate aspect of cadence through which the Qur'an achieves euphony, the musical sounds which exist in every single verse, like a symphony. This suggestion calls for an analysis of other linguistic strategies that may be used in translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa. Among such strategies is domestication versus foreignisation which is discussed next.

### 2.3 Domestication versus Foreignisation

In this section, attention is given to a comparison between the domestication strategy and the foreignisation strategy of translation in order to find the best approach for translating the Arabic Qur'an. A detailed discussion of domestication and foreignisation is set out in the subparagraphs below. The role players of these strategies are Schleiermacher and Venuti. The research highlights Schleiermacher and Venuti's opinions of the two strategies.



Domestication and foreignisation are both linked to Nida's dynamic (functional) equivalence and formal equivalence.

Functional equivalence is linked to domestication as usually the domestication strategy is used in order for the target reader to experience the target text as something familiar.

It is also suggested that the recent refinements of the dynamic (functional) equivalence approach may be seen as clarification of this distinction, in an attempt to prevent overly domesticating the Scriptures, as occurs, for example, in the inappropriate use of cultural or theological substitutes, and at the same time to maintain the concern to not overly foreignise the text so as to alienate readers or perpetuate stereotypes about (biblical) language (Kirk 2005:94). Foreignisation is linked to formal equivalence because in both strategies, there is concern that the message in the target language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language (Nida 2000:156).

### **2.3.1 Domestication**

Schleiermacher (in Munday 2001:28) defines domestication as a translator's act of leaving the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer towards the reader. Schleiermacher (1992: 47) poses the following rhetoric question:

“Who would not like to have his native language appear everywhere in its most enticing beauty, of which every genre is capable?”

It is suggested that a translation is the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that will be intelligible to the target language reader (Venuti 1995:18). It is further noted that *domestication* is an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home (Venuti 1995:20).

Even in a translation of the Arabic Qur'an into English, the target language is not entirely domesticated. This is evident in the fact that when reference to God is made in the English Qur'an, the Arabic term *Allah* is used. Nevertheless, in the isiXhosa translation, there seems to be no hegemony of Arabic because the word God is domesticated into *Qamata*.

The key issue to recognise is that different audiences are best suited by translations of completely different types (Kirk 2005:93). Kirk (2005:95) furthermore suggests that de Waard and Nida explicitly distinguish translations based on functional equivalence (which



may be understood as linguistic domestication), from cultural reinterpretations (which involve cultural domestication). However, it must be noted that Nida's main concern was to bring the Biblical message across.

Domestication is also defined as making strangeness understandable and to help the reader gain access to the other culture and see the analogies with their own situation more clearly (Nord 2001:195). Venuti (1995:21) notes that the phrase "naturalness of expression" signals the importance of a fluent strategy to this theory of translation, and in Nida's work it is obvious that fluency involves domestication.

Schäffner (2007:2) is of the opinion that by domestication, the translation would be adapted to the style of the target language with which the reader is familiar. It is suggested that domestication of the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa will not be a 'foreign' concept for the target audience since the target audience has always been worshipping. It is noted that very often this domestication approach has been well accepted by the indigenous peoples (Kirk 2005:95). Translating from any given source language into a required target language is in itself domestication because a text is translated into a language that is familiar to a target audience.

### **2.3.2 Foreignisation**

Foreignisation is defined as the translator leaving the writer alone as much as possible and moving the reader towards the writer (Munday 2001:28). In this strategy the translation would be very close to the linguistic format of the source text (Schäffner 2007:2). Venuti (in Schäffner & Wiesenmann 2001:12–3) states that a translated text should be where a different culture emerges and where a reader gets a glimpse of a cultural other. It is further suggested that resistancy, a translation strategy based on an aesthetic of discontinuity, can best preserve that difference by reminding the reader of the gains and losses in the translation process and the unbridgeable gaps between cultures. According to this statement Venuti is in favour of foreignisation. However, should a translator in translating the Arabic Qur'an, decides to use foreignisation for the entire translation the target reader will learn about the Arab world and their culture but will experience a resistance against the isiXhosa world. As already stated many of the target readers find Arabic as "rumblings" that do not make sense.

This is evident in the suggestion by Schäffner and Wiesenman (2001:12) that Venuti criticises the dominant Anglo-American tradition of fluency and transparency in translation

as the “forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text with a text that will be intelligible to the target-language reader.” Venuti (1991:129) notes that for Schleiermacher, “the genuine translator” is a writer “who wants to bring those two completely separated persons, his/her author and his/her reader, truly together, and who would like to bring the reader to an understanding and enjoyment of the former as correct and complete as possible without inviting him/her to leave the sphere of his/her mother tongue.”

In this strategy, it is noted that the translator aims to preserve the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, but only as it is perceived in the translation by a limited readership, an educated elite (Venuti 1991:130). The author of this study suggests that translating the Arabic Qur’an into isiXhosa, using a foreignisation strategy will “obscure” the message for the target audience and the prayers and sermons will still come across to the target audience as “rumblings”. If indigenous peoples cannot generally distinguish the foreignness, they are likely to associate a foreignising translation with colonialism and reject it (Kirk 2005:95). This is suggested by the mere fact that when one converts into Islam, it is expected that the person should have an “Islamic name” which basically is an Arabic name. In Ramadan (2007:159–160) it is noted that the first Muslims never imagined there could be such a thing as Islamic names of exclusive Arab origin.

It is suggested that for people who are not that well educated, the foreignness of a text, if reflected in a translation, will not be appreciated, but will simply be confusing (Kirk 2005:93). However, Venuti (1995:20) states that the “foreign” in foreignising translation is not a transparent representation of an essence that resides in the foreign text and is valuable, but is a strategic construction whose value is contingent on the current target-language situation.

Gutt (in Kirk 2005:97) notes that “translation is bound by its commitment to keep the content of the original Scripture unchanged.” This suggests that during the translation process of the Arabic Qur’an, a translator has to keep in mind what message is entailed and the purpose of the Qur’an. It is noted that the notion of foreignisation can alter the ways translations are read as well as produced because this notion assumes a concept of human subjectivity that is very different from the humanist assumptions underlying domestication (Venuti 1995:24).

## 2.4 Functionalist Approach

Functionalist means focusing on the function or functions of the target text within its target culture (Nord 1997a:1). Nord (1997a:1) further states that functionalism is a broad term for various theories that approach translation in this way. It is argued that the intended function of the translation in its new environment is what determines the shape of the target text (Hermans 1994:14). Nord's approach is pragmatic, in that it proceeds from the view that translation does not occur in a vacuum (Naudé 2000:5). Nord (1997b:46) suggests that translation is not the transcoding of words or sentences from one language to another, but a complex form of action, whereby someone provides information on a text (source language material) in a new situation and under changed functional, cultural and linguistic conditions, preserving formal aspects as closely as possible.

Vermeer (1998:50) suggests that a target text is meant to “function” according to a translation purpose intended for the target-culture recipients that is in principle independent of a source text and its source-culture wording, purpose and intended recipients. It is noted that scholars working within the functionalist approach prefer to speak of a source text and target text instead of source-language and target-language, because they want to demonstrate that translation is not only a linguistic activity (Schäffner 2007:6). Schäffner (2007:6) notes that with functionalist approaches the first step in each translating activity is the analysis of the specific translation assignment which is followed by a translation-oriented analysis of the source text. It is suggested that as an alternative to equivalence, Reiss introduced a functional category into her translation model (Naudé 2000:5).

Functionalist approaches view translation as a professional text production for intercultural communication, and as a social and cognitive activity performed by experts (Schäffner & Wieseemann 2001:4). It is argued that functionalist approaches to translation work very well in describing and explaining translation processes and products and they are not based on an opposition between linguistic and cultural aspects (Schäffner & Wieseemann 2001:13). The functionalist approach reject the perception of translation as meaning transfer (as commonly found in the linguistic approach, and also repeatedly in the text-linguistic approach) as being too narrow (Schäffner & Wieseemann 2001:14). A text is “functional” when it serves the function or functions it is intended for, and text function is determined by the factors of the situation in which the text will have to serve as a communicative instrument (Nord 1997b:

54). The function of the target text in this research is for the target audience to be able to understand the holy Qu’ran so that they could use it as their guide by which to live their lives.

Nord (1997b: 54) says that the process of producing a “functional” target text therefore has to start from an analysis of the target situation. As already stated in Chapter 1, this study is the result of the fact that the target audience, more especially those that do not have knowledge of Arabic or English, are struggling to understand the prayers and sermons that are delivered in these languages and as a result they find themselves not being able to relate to Islam as their religion. As a result they perceive the sermons and prayers as “rumblings”.

Vermeer (1998:50) states that the primary aim of translating is to design a target text capable of functioning optimally in the target culture. Nord (2001:187) points out that the functionalist approach considers translation to be a communicative interaction between individuals and that translation is intended to achieve a communicative purpose except that there is a ‘gap’ between the two parties involved. The translator acts as a mediator to make communication possible in spite of the cultural differences between the groups. However, Nord (2001:187) also notes that the participants do not ‘jump over’ the gap but they stay where they are and remain what they are, members of their own cultural community. This therefore suggests that Muslims who are Xhosa speaking should not become Arabic because they are Muslims but should remain Xhosa. This can only happen when the Qur’an serves its purpose of guiding the Muslims in a language they understand.

Nord’s functionalist approach can be linked to Venuti’s foreignisation. This is suggested by the fact that should there be a bigger cultural gap, the translator has the possibility to make strangeness understandable and to help the reader both gain access to the other culture and see the analogies with their own situation more clearly (Nord 2001:195). The author further notes that this may be done through an “exoticizing translation” which is understood as a translation that focuses on the foreignness of the source-text content. Nord’s functionalist approach works hand in hand with loyalty. Loyalty is defined as a responsibility that the translator has to both the target audience and the source-text sender; loyalty commits a translator bilaterally to both the source and the target side (Nord 2001:195). This therefore suggests that in translating the Arabic Qur’an into isiXhosa, the translator has to keep in mind that he/she has a responsibility to keep to the communicative intention of the source-text sender, but that he/she also needs to take into account the cultural context of the target audience (Nord 2001:195).

The functionalist approaches were initiated, in principle, by Vermeer with his Skopos theory (Schäffner & Wiesemann 2001:14). The skopos theory is discussed in the section below.

### **2.4.1 Definition of Skopos Theory**

The word skopos is a Greek term meaning “purpose” (Nord 1997a:27). Vermeer (2000:221) defines skopos as a technical term for the aim or purpose of a translation and that translational action leads to a “target text”. It is suggested (Vermeer 2000:222) that a source text is usually composed originally for a situation in a source culture; hence its status as “source text”, and hence the role of the translator in the process of intercultural communication for composing a text for a situation in a target culture. This is supported by the definition of translation as an interlingual, intercultural, interdisciplinary communicative act which involves source-text induced target text production in a specific context, for a specific addressee, in such a way as to ensure that the target text fulfils its intended function within the target culture for the target addressee (Feinauer 2009). The skopos theory is culture-oriented because it considers translation as a “cross-cultural event” (Nord 1997:46).

Naudé (2000:5) states that Vermeer regards a translation as a translation when it functions as a text in the target culture; the function of the translation in the target culture determines which aspects of the source text should be transferred to the translation. The skopos theory is presented as being sufficiently generic to cover a multitude of individual cases, i.e. to be independent of individual languages, cultures, subject domains, text types and genres (Schäffner & Wiesemann 2001:15).

Thus translation has a purpose and the target text has to “fulfil its intended function”, the question then arises: “What is the purpose of the Qur’an for the target audience of this research?” For the Muslims the Qur’an is the word of God and its theological message transcends the boundaries of the Arab peninsula and carries a universal message to all mankind regardless of their language, consequently the message of the Qur’an cannot be disseminated without translating its language into other target languages (Abdul-Raof 2005:162).

The response to the question above suggests that the Qur’an serves as a guide to Muslims in their religion. Therefore, the function of the Qur’an is to convey a message from Allah on how Muslims should carry themselves. Nord (2001:185) asserts that when a translator uses the functionalist approach in translating, loyalty should be employed and that it (loyalty) is

meant to replace the traditional intertextual relationship of faithfulness or fidelity, concepts that usually refer to linguistic or stylistic similarity between the source and the target texts, regardless of the communicative intentions involved. Loyalty is an ethical, interpersonal term whereas faithfulness is seen as intertextual. Translators should therefore be loyal to their target text readers, clients and source text authors (depending on the type of source text), not to the source text itself.

Nord calls this moral imperative ‘loyalty’ and invokes it as a safeguard against situations where, for example the target text reader accepts the translation as a faithful reproduction of source text author intentions (Harvey 1998:287). Vermeer has three hierarchical rules – the skopos rule, coherence rule, and fidelity rule (Schäffner & Wiesemann 2001:15). The skopos rule states that translation, as a sub-category of human action is determined by its purpose (skopos), the coherence rule stipulates that the target text must be sufficiently coherent in itself to allow the intended users to comprehend it, and the fidelity rule concerns intertextual coherence between source text and target text and it stipulates that some relationship must remain between the two once the overriding principle of skopos and the rule of intertextual coherence have been satisfied (Schäffner & Wiesemann 2001:16).

It is noted that the conception of the source text merely as an offer of information has been criticised and objected to mainly from the linguistically oriented approaches which argue that the target-orientedness means a dethronement of the source language text, a neglect of the richness of its meaning (Schäffner & Wiesemann 2001:17). However, Harvey (1998:271) is of the opinion that translation is not only carried out on the strength of an interpretation but also on the basis of what function the target text is called upon to realise and for whom. It is also suggested that for a translation whose skopos includes use in a specifically religious context, there is always a requirement that, whatever language the text is converted to, the exegetical significance should remain constant (Long 2005:13). Nord’s functionalist approach considers translation to be a communicative interaction between individuals (Nord, 2001:187)

It is important for practitioners to note that the translation of the sensitive Qur’anic text into a different language and culture does not always require one to keep the source language linguistic and/or rhetorical constituents of texture intact as target text linguistic/rhetorical constituents of texture have to be employed (Abdul-Raof 2001:110). The author continues that target language texture has to be governed by target language linguistic and rhetorical

norms of texture in order to achieve acceptability, rhetorical stimuli, purposeful communicative interaction, and a response in the target language reader similar to that generated by the source language in its audience. This principle can thus be applied with the translation of the Qur'an so that the response in the target language reader is similar to that of the source language reader. The question to ask is: Does functionalism play a role in the translation of holy texts and specifically, of the Qur'an? In responding to this question, it is suggested that the function of a translation can be analysed from a double perspective focusing (a) on the relationship between the target text and its audience and (b) on the relationship between the target text and the corresponding source text (Nord 1997a:45–6). Nord (1997a:46; 2001:187) further states that a translation is a text which is intended to function for the target receivers and, as such, may be intended for any communicative function.

Functionalism definitely plays a role in the translation of the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa, because the function of the isiXhosa Qur'an is important and because the meaning of the Qur'an should not be obscured to the isiXhosa target readers, as this is not the case with Arab-speaking Muslims.

However, functionalism can best work with other strategies that are discussed in Chapter 5 of the research..

## **2.5 Untranslatability of the Arabic Qur'an**

The scriptural movement between cultures has been a major source of development in translation theory (Long 2005:10). Long observes that any cultural contact, interference or exchange requires translation, particularly in the area of what each culture holds as sacred or holy. Long notes that holy texts resist translation, since the space it needs in the target language is often already occupied and the available vocabulary is already culturally loaded with indigenous referents. In the belief that other languages are deficient in relation to Arabic, some Muslims resisted the translation of the Qur'an into other languages (Lacunza-Balda 1993:235). Other Muslims' resistance was due to the identification of the Arabic language with Islam's glorious past (Sanneh 1994:36). It is implied that resistance to translation has more to do with control of interpretation than with any inherent textual untranslatability (Long 2005:8). Those who argue that the Qur'an cannot be translated believe that there is some necessary correlation between Arabic and the message itself (Wadud-Muhsin 1992:7).



As a result, it has been established through research that this has posed a serious challenge for many Muslims whose vernacular is not Arabic in that many recited the prayers without understanding the meaning thereof (Sesanti 2009:33; Tayob 1995:111, Lacunza-Balda 1993:233). In a recent study conducted Sesanti (2009: 41) notes that the issue of Arabic and Islam in South Africa is historically not a unique African problem. Indian and Malay Muslims recited and read the Arabic Qur'an in mosques and madrassahs without understanding the text until the 1970s when the Muslim Youth Movement, pioneered the reading of the English translation of the Qur'an in South Africa (Sesanti 2009:41-42). Sesanti (2009:41) further points out that for Kwa-Nobuhle Muslims, who were attending the mosques in town, all along had to listen either to English or Afrikaans renditions mixed with the Arabic language. Sesanti (2009:41) further points out that while attending mosques in town, the Kwa-Nobuhle Muslims are always on the receiving end of either English or Afrikaans renditions mixed with the Arabic language. It is further noted that mother-tongue speakers find themselves in the anomalous position of their languages being considered profane for the decisive acts of the religious code (Sanneh 1994:24). Sanneh points out that this is as a result of Muslims ascribing the status of a revealed language to Arabic, the medium in which the Qur'an, the sacred scripture of Islam, was revealed.

Toker (in Long 2005:8) argues strongly from a philosophical standpoint that translation, interpretation and speaking with tongues is not only permitted but is necessary for the building up of the house of God. It has been observed that the translation of the Arabic Qur'an into African languages has contributed to the growth of Islam. In this regard, Diouf (1998:25) points out that when the Qur'an was translated into Pulaar, the language of the Fulani, and as the holy book became more accessible, "Islam grew deeper roots." Reichmuth (2000:431) notes that in West Africa, Muslim leaders spread the word of Islam in African languages, particularly Fulfude and Hausa, that became major tools for the propagation of Islam morals and doctrines, and also for the treatment of other public issues. The use of local languages for religious and didactic purposes was increasing tremendously in the central Sudan (Reichmuth 2000:431).

The languages mentioned above are all African languages thus the issues surrounding the untranslatability of the Qur'an really has nothing to do with these languages but rather with the fact that the translation of the Qur'an has always been dealt with from a theological and historical perspective (Abdul-Raof 2001:1). African Muslims who begin their life with the obvious disadvantage of worshipping in a strange and foreign language will sooner or later



reach, or be made to reach, the stage where practice, however imperfect, creates proximity and culpability (Sanneh 1994:31).

Being a Muslim does not mean that person is necessarily an Arab for it was noted that Yoruba Muslims have ingeniously blended Yoruba traditions with their understanding of Islam (Sanneh 1994:36). Sanneh further notes that at that level, a form of translation certainly goes on, and no one who is familiar with Muslim Africa will question that. Sesanti (2009:42) mentions that it is not a prerequisite in Islam for Muslim converts to change their names into Arabic. Ramadan (in Sesanti 2009:42) notes that when the changes of names took place “(n)ever did the first Muslim imagine there could be such a thing as ‘Islamic names,’ of exclusively Arab origin”.

Al-Farsay (in Lacunza-Balda 1997:113) believes that no matter how important Arabic might be in the understanding of the Qur’an and Islam, knowledge of the language is not absolutely necessary for Muslims in East Africa: “Islam does not want colonialism of religion... Arabic is not necessary.” Lacunza-Balda (1997:113) adds that this statement is not suggesting a betrayal of Arabic; it can rather be looked upon as an intellectual move towards greater freedom in the use of Swahili as a legitimate African language for writing about Islam and translating the Qur’an.

Lacunza-Balda (1993:231) notes that the latest Qur’anic school in Bunia (Zaire) has a sign written in Arabic above the entrance door, but the only language of instruction in the school is Kiswahili. This implies that for an educator to make sure that what is taught is understood it is important to learn and be taught in the learner’s mother tongue.

The translation of the Qur’an helps to take away the cultural and linguistic veil behind which the Islamic message is concealed to those Muslims not speaking Arabic (Lacunza-Balda 1997:96). It is noted that context rather than content makes the Qur’an untranslatable (Long 2005:8). Long maintains that the intrinsic qualities of the text, whatever kind of text it is, remain the same, and what changes, is the way in which it is received and employed by its readership. Green (in Long 2005:13) notes that the movements of the sacred word from the oral to written were also movements of translation.

This is the case with the Arabic Qur’an, for it was revealed to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel in an oral text in Arabic (Lings 1983:43; Graham 1985:29; Abdul-Raof 2001:180). In order to maintain the epistemological purity of the original idiom of communication

contributed thereto that over centuries Muslim scholars regarded acts of translation (of the Qur'an in particular) with some suspicion (Green 2005:141). However, Green further points out that Islam has functioned as one of the great civilisations of translation in human history.

It is important for the translator and the interpreter to be aware of the associations underpinning the message of the expressions that are denotatively similar but are connotatively distinct from one culture to another (Abdul-Raof 2005:164). Abdul-Raof (2005:165) continues that the translation or interpreting strategy that needs to be adopted when encountering cultural words is to abandon the literal rendering, in other words formal equivalence cannot be applied. It is noted throughout that the message of the Arabic Qur'an is not untranslatable but that precautions and different approaches should be kept in mind when translating. Abdul-Raof (2005:172) notes that to paraphrase, through domestication, transposition or dynamic (functional) equivalence, may be the solution. Elsewhere, Abdul-Raof (2001:182) suggests an adoption of a communicative translation strategy to relay to the target audience the meanings of the Qur'an rather than providing an archaic diction that can alienate the target reader.

Barnwell (in Abdul-Raof 2001:182) argues that the translator's goal is to translate the message. The whole purpose of translation is that people should understand the message. Muslims in all walks of life should be able to understand the message from their Creator, for the Qur'an is a message to all humankind (Abdul-Raof 2001:183). The instrumental way of understanding the message is to have it translated into the languages that people were created to speak.

## **2.6 Summary**

The literature reviewed in this chapter suggest that the strategies discussed, i.e. formal and functional equivalence, domestication and foreignisation, and functionalism and the skopos theory, have their advantages and disadvantages in translation. However, the domestication strategy, functionalist approach and the skopos theory are seen as the most favourable strategies to be used when translating an Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa.

To narrow the gap of cultural unfamiliarity, the following must be done: domesticate the source language; use exegetical footnotes to bring the message home to the target language audience; increase the source text informativity, and maintain the intention of the source text (Abdul-Raof 2005:172). Then, in order to narrow the communicative gap between languages

when translating the Qur'an, marginal notes to illuminate the fog of language and demist any ambiguity, should be used (Abdul-Raof 2001:3).

This chapter dealt with the theoretical aspects of translation. It has been stated that it is feasible to translate the Qur'an into isiXhosa and though there are conflicting thoughts on this, it is a reality that holy text translation is in fact taking place even though such actions and results will never satisfy everyone. (Long 2005:15). Last but not least, it is also noted that whoever speaks the word of God in a tongue unknown to his/her interlocutor should at the same time interpret or translate what he/she is saying into a language they both understand so that his/her interlocutor may also be welcomed to the house of Being (Onur Toker 2005:34–5).

The translation of the messages of the Qur'an is a major human contribution in cross-cultural fertilisation; it is a unique charity to humanity (Abdul-Raof 2001:1). Translation is empowering, because in one's mother tongue one has access to the entire pipe organ and all its registers and in one's acquired language, one tries to express oneself on a toy piano (Krog 2003:270). It is assumed that translating should mean a literal reproduction of the syntactic and lexical features of the source text, even though such renderings may make little or no sense and though they are crude distortions of one's own mother tongue (de Waard & Nida 1986:10). When translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa this literal reproduction might be misleading because it does not make sense to translate a source text as faithfully in other words as literally as possible, if such a strategy makes the understanding of the translation unnecessarily difficult for the intended target recipients or prevents understanding the translated text altogether (Vermeer 1998:43).

The next chapter (Chapter 3) will be an analysis of the word-for-word translation samples of the Qur'an. The chapter will look at the translation samples of one chapter of the Qur'an into different languages. The advantages and disadvantages of translating a sacred text using a word-for-word translation strategy are highlighted. The first chapter of the Qur'an namely *Surah Al Fatihah*, is studied.

## Chapter 3

### Analysis of the word-for-word translation samples of the Qur'an

#### 3.1 Aim

This chapter investigates the translation of the same chapter of the Qur'an into two different languages. The source texts for the word-for-word translation samples will be the first chapter of the Qur'an, *Surah Al Fatihah* in Arabic and English. The translations that will be dealt with will be Arabic into isiXhosa and English into isiXhosa.

The reasons for choosing these language pairs are firstly that the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic and that one of the languages into which it was translated is English, a language that is understood by most educated Xhosa Muslims who do not understand Arabic. Secondly the Arabic into isiXhosa translation is part of the study as the researcher wants to determine if it is at all feasible to translate the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa. The main reason for translating from Arabic into isiXhosa is to avoid a translation of a translation as the case would be if the Qur'an is translated from English into isiXhosa.

It was imperative for the researcher to choose *Surah Al Fatihah* as it is an opening chapter of the Qur'an (Ali 1989: 13). *Surah Al Fatihah* is an Essence of the Book (Qur'an) in that it teaches Muslims the perfect Prayer (Ali 1989: 13). The Qur'an was revealed in an Arab context of culture that is entirely alien to a target language audience outside the Arab peninsula (Abdul-Raof 2005: 162). Therefore, the researcher would like to suggest that where there are different languages, there are also different cultures and that since *Surah Al Fatihah* intends to "teach Muslims the perfect Prayer"; this need to happen in a language a Muslim is born in. In this case the target audience consists of isiXhosa speakers.

For the above to happen, the original text, in so far as possible, must be translated integrally and in the most exact manner, without omissions or additions in terms of its content, and without paraphrases or glosses (Long 2005:6), citing a *Liturgicam Authenticam*, (a document on the use of vernacular in the liturgy). It is noted that the Qur'an's distinctive sociolinguistic constraints are, therefore, serious impediments to comprehension and that paraphrasing,

through domestication, transposition or dynamic equivalence, may be the solution, however it robs the Qur'anic text of its distinctive religious character (Abdul-Raof 2005:172).

Gloss is a type of translation by means of which the form (e.g. syntax, word order, idiomatic expressions) and content (e.g. the subject matter) of the source language text are recreated in the target text as closely as possible and in such a way that they are comprehensible to the target text reader (Munday 2009:193). Munday notes that a gloss translation presents a typical example of formal equivalence. The difference between gloss and word-for-word translation is that a gloss translation keeps the form of the source text and renders an idiomatic target text whereas in word-for-word translation, the form of the source text is also kept, but the translator stays so close to the target text that the target language is not always idiomatic. Gloss translation is also known as literal translation whereas word-for-word translation is also known as calque.

Keeping the definitions of gloss in mind, the researcher is of the opinion that this strategy will not be suitable to translate the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa, because the aim of translating the Qur'an into isiXhosa is not to recreate the form of the text but mainly to make the message from the Arabic Qur'an accessible to the target audience. This leaves the option of the word-for-word method of translation, but would it be a suitable method to employ when translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa? The response to the question posed will be dealt with in the body of this chapter.

The definition of a word-for-word method of translation and its requirements will be discussed prior to the analysis of the translation samples. Thereafter the opinion of scholars concerning the word-for-word method of translation will be analysed. In doing so, the advantages and disadvantages of translating a sacred text using a word-for-word translation strategy will be highlighted.

With the analysis of the word-for-word strategy, reference will be made to the translation samples throughout. The translation sample from Arabic into isiXhosa is attached as Addendum A and the translation sample from English into isiXhosa is attached as Addendum B. In concluding this chapter, the problems and solutions concerning this word-for-word strategy are discussed.

As mentioned interviews were conducted as part of this research and these are included in this chapter. The interviews were held with Xhosa Muslims who have studied Arabic and the

questions refer to the word-for-word translation of *Surah Al Fatihah* and the need to translate the Arabic Qur'an directly into isiXhosa. Through the interviews it has been determined whether it is feasible to translate the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa and whether the need is still there for an isiXhosa Qur'an. Lastly, suggestions on the findings during the analysis will also be given.

### **3.2 Definition of a word-for-word translation**

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995:84–5) suggest that a word-for-word translation strategy falls under what is called a direct method of translation. Under the direct method there are three procedures, viz. borrowing, calque and literal translations (Vinay & Darbelnet 1995:85–6). When analysing the two word-for-word sample translations, the three procedures mentioned above will be dealt with in detail. Gutt (2000:135) notes that a direct translation calls for the preservation of all communicative clues of the source text for the source text reader in the target text for the target text reader.

Newmark (1988:69) suggests that a word-for-word translation transfers source language grammar and word order, as well as the primary meanings of all the source language words, into the translation, and it is normally effective only for brief simple neutral sentences. The word-for-word translation is a pedagogical and artificial method of translation, and is not a recognisable empirical stage in the process of translation (Sturrock 2010:57). Vinay & Darbelnet (1995:86) remark that this strategy is common when translating between two languages of the same family and even more so when the languages share the same culture.

It is suggested that Nida's formal equivalence provides some degree of insight into the lexical, grammatical or structural form of a source text (Hatim & Mason 1990: 7). Formal equivalence is said to be focusing "attention on the meaning itself, in both form and content" (Tymoczko 1985: 63). This suggests that a word-for-word method of translation is closer to formal equivalence because formal equivalence implies that the message in the receptor language is to match as closely as possible the corresponding linguistic forms in the source language (House 2009: 18).

Thus, should a metaphor or idiom of the Arabic Qur'an be translated according to the word-for-word method it would highlight the literal sense of the source text and transfer it into the target language.

### **3.3 Different views of scholars on word-for-word translation strategy**

What follows is a discussion of the different views of scholars on and the advantages and disadvantages of the word-for-word translation strategy. The aim is to prove that a word-for-word translation strategy is not suitable for translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa.

#### **3.3.1 Views supportive of word-for-word strategy**

According to Sturrock (2010:55) a word-for-word translation is sometimes needed to give a direct feeling of the source language, which a free translation can in no way replace. Literal translation, also known as a word-for-word translation is unique in that it is reversible, thus it can be back translated and be complete (Vinay & Darbelnet 1995:86). This means that when translation between two closely related languages takes place, it is easy to use a word-for-word translation. As a result, when a back translation takes place, the same form and meaning is captured in the target text/source text as in the source text/target text. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995:86) further note that this is even more so when the two languages share the same culture. Kirk (2005:97) citing Gutt, points out that if a translation of a holy text is to claim authenticity, it must be a direct translation in which contextual adaptation is disallowed. Gutt's direct translation however allows for glosses and footnotes.

Literal translation is rare but is welcomed when a text can be transferred from one language into another with no changes other than those required by the target-language grammar (Fawcett 1997: 36). Tymoczko (1985:63) further states that formal equivalent translations are more objective than dynamic equivalent translations, because formal equivalent or word-for-word translation will not involve any interpretation. Serious readers of holy texts usually do not want interpretation by the translator. Nevertheless, the researcher is still concerned about whether this is the strategy to use for translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa.

#### **3.3.2 Views against word-for-word strategy**

In a word-for-word translation that also focuses on syntax but that is not concerned with comprehensibility, no fluency is found (Cazdyn 2010:453). Sturrock (2010:55) notes that there cannot be a word-for-word translation of more than a few words at a time because no two natural languages are structurally close enough to allow it. Arabic and isiXhosa are two

languages structurally very far removed from each other. Arabic itself is divided in Qur'anic Arabic as well as Arabic and the grammatical structure of the Qur'anic Arabic is in many cases different from the grammatical structure of non-Qur'anic Arabic (Mustapha 2009:226). Therefore, if there are two grammatically different Arabics, how much more would Arabic be totally different from isiXhosa. The above implies that a word-for-word strategy will definitely not lead to a target text conveying the message of the source text as it was originally conveyed and understood by the source audience.

It is further noted by Sturrock (2010:57) that a word-for-word translation is a model marked 'for display purpose only' and that in its flagrant inadequacy or incompleteness, it points beyond itself, to the 'free' or 'natural' translation to come, the one accepted as a well-formed target text. All varieties of translating and adapting, including literal translation, have certain legitimacy for particular audiences and special circumstances (Kirk 2005:93).

The direct translation approach of putting authenticity before communicative clarity leads to serious theoretical and practical problems (Kirk 2005:98). Newmark defines communicative translation, as "attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained by the readers of the original," and it is suggested that the communicative translation generally is likely to be smoother, simpler, clearer, more direct, more conventional and conforming to a particular register of language (Newmark 1981:39).

Hatim and Mason (1990:180) suggest that any decision taken strictly at word or phrase level might well result in the expression of a negative concept in many languages. For instance, in Arabic, if a person is referred to as an owl, it means that that person is a wise person whereas in isiXhosa the same reference will suggest that a person is evil or is a bad omen as an owl is regarded as bearer of evil news or a bad omen by the target reader. Therefore, a translator should not only consider transferring the referential meaning of a word or phrase but also keep the cultural implications in mind.

Long (2005:4) states that Nida developed a contextualised approach to holy text translation, offering what he first described as 'dynamic equivalence' as a possible alternative to the old paradigm of word-for-word faithfulness to the source text. It is pointed out that functional (earlier known as dynamic equivalence means a translation rendering thorough understanding of not only the message of the source text but also the manner in which the intended receptors of a text are likely to understand it in the receptor language (de Waard & Nida 1986:9).



Should this approach be applied to the translation of the Qur'an, non-Arabic Muslims would be able to understand the translated text just as well as Arabic speaking Muslims.

### **3.4. Analysis of word-for-word samples of Chapter one of the Qur'an**

The research in this section deals with an analysis of the word-for-word translation sample from Arabic into isiXhosa in paragraph 3.4.1. The focus of the analysis is on whether the translation did justice to the grammatical rules of the target language and whether the message of the Arabic Qur'an has been conveyed as it is conveyed to a Muslim who understands Arabic. A brief background of the person who has done the word-for-word translation is also given. The target text is analysed verse by verse and sometimes reference is made to other verses in the same text. A back translation of the word-for-word translation sample is also provided in this section.

Paragraph 3.4.2 deals with an analysis of a word-for-word translation sample of the same chapter of the Qur'an from English into isiXhosa. A back translation of the target text into English has also been provided in this section. As in paragraph 3.4.1, the focus is more on the translation strategy investigating whether it conveys the necessary message and whether it violates the target language's grammar. These word-for-word translation samples from Arabic and English into isiXhosa are found in Addenda A and B. The back translations of these samples are at the end of each analysis and a few remarks are made regarding the back translations.

#### **3.4.1. Arabic into isiXhosa**

This translation was done by Interviewee 6. Interviewee 6 is not a translator by profession but he studied Arabic and Islamic Studies. He is an isiXhosa mother-tongue speaker, giving him the advantage of knowing both the target and the source language. In this translation he deliberately used a word-for-word method as required by the researcher.

In the very first verse of the translation a strategy of borrowing was used: *Ngegama lika-Allah OneNceba OnoBulungisa*, this is the simplest of all translation strategies (Vinay & Darbelnet 1995:85). The name *Allah* is borrowed from Arabic and is usually translated as *God* in English. This foreign term is used in the target language because it introduces the flavour of a foreign culture into the translation (Vinay & Darbelnet 1995:85) and because the Muslim

target audience can relate to this name. Fawcett (1997:34), citing Fedorov, states that borrowing a term when a possible translation is available, might be intended to retain the “shade of specificity” of the foreign object or institution. For the target culture in this research, the translation equivalent for God would be *Qamata*, but the word *Allah* is used so that the same effect is conveyed and to ensure that a cultural other is not translated entirely out of context (Fawcett, 1997:34).

The very first verse of the translation has orthographic problems. For instance, according to the target language rules, capital letters are not used in the middle of a sentence unless a word is a name of a person, a place or a name of a thing, etc. However, the words *OneNceba* and *OnoBulungisa* are written as such because the translator had to stick to the Arabic source text. These isiXhosa words are copulatives of relatives and adverbs and they require to be written in small letters but because they are used to describe Allah’s mercy and justice towards the believers, the translated words had to be written in capital letters as an indication of the attributes of the Creator. However, the problem here is that there are two capital letters in one word, for instance *OneNceba*. As much as this word describe *Allah*, the “N” for *OneNceba* should have been written in a lower case as it suggests contributes that Allah has instead of what/who Allah is. It is correct for the “O” to be written in upper case, since it refers directly to *Allah*.

The second verse, *Udumo (Nombulelo) ku-Allah Umphathi walo lonke elimiweyo*, is a *word-for-word* translation, but it is not a literal translation because the syntax of the target language is correct and the message conveyed in the source text is also conveyed in the target language. However, no punctuation marks were used. As the Qur’an is meant to be recited by Muslims, the fact that there are no punctuation marks may cause this text to be senseless when recited. Grammatically, it would have been acceptable in the target language to use a comma between the first part of the sentence *Udumo (Nombulelo) ku-Allah* and the second part *Umphathi walo lonke elimiweyo*. This highlights a disadvantage of word-for-word translating as the incorrect use or absence of a punctuation mark may affect the tone of reading and understanding the text in the target language.

In the second part of the sentence the word *Umphathi* carries with it the qualities associated with a human being and it is also an attribute of *Allah*. This raises the issue of whether *Allah* is a human being. The word *Allah* has a number of componential features idiosyncratic in

Islam because it designates above all the oneness of God (i.e. monotheism) who has 99 attributes mentioned in the Qur'an (Abdul-Raof 2005:166).

In the third verse, *Lowo – UneNceba Lowo – unoBulungisa*, a third person demonstrative pronoun *Lowo* is used. The use of this pronoun suggests that *Allah* is in a specific space/place. *Lowo* is a demonstrative pronoun for a third person and is a long form of a weaker class (Riordan & Mathiso 1969: 256-7). This could also suggest that there is someone else who can be worshiped, hence the use of this particular demonstrative which seeks to differentiate and to intensify the point driven home that *Allah* is the One that has mercy and compassion and compared to a human being, *Allah* does not falter. In isiXhosa, a demonstrative pronoun sometimes works hand in hand with a noun or is used to replace a noun and a demonstrative pronoun can be used as a subject or an object (Sonqishe, Kondlo & Jafta 2005:53). In this sample, the latter is the case. The word *Lowo* refers to *Allah* who is the only God worshipped by Muslims. Again in the sentence, the nouns *Nceba* and *Bulungisa* are used but with different concords. The words in the sentence are *UneNceba* and *unoBulungisa*. The reason for this is that this is a definition of how *Allah* is, whereas *OneNceba* and *OnoBulungisa* are copulative verbs (Du Plessis & Visser nd:290).

The fourth verse, *Inkosi yemini Womgwebo* conveys the message of the source text correctly because the syntax of the target language is adhered to. However, according to the grammatical rules of the target language, the word *Womgwebo* is incorrect. It should have been written as *Yomgwebo*. The word *Yomgwebo* is a possessive pronoun which is used to refer to the subject of the sentence, in this case, *Inkosi* not *Unkosi*. The possessive pronoun as it is written here does not correspond with the subject concord. These errors occur typically with literal translation and when the translator does word-for-word translation from Arabic into isiXhosa. From the fifth verse to the seventh verse, the translation implies that the speaker is talking directly to *Allah* whereas the first four verses are talking about *Allah*. In the fifth verse *Nguwe wedwa Esimkhonzayo Kwaye Nguwe wedwa esicela kuye Uncedo*, the words *Nguwe wedwa* suggest emphasis. In isiXhosa the word *Nguwe* is specific and when used with *wedwa*, the message sent is intensified. *Wedwa* is a quantitative pronoun which is built with the quantitative stem *-dwa* (Riordan & Mathiso 1969:273). It is also referred to as a quantifier (Du Plessis & Visser 1992:371). In this case the quantitative pronoun is used with a copulative *Nguwe* that is constructed by using a copulative concord – *ngu-* plus an absolute pronoun *wena* whereby *-na* is omitted. These two words are also repeated in the same phrase to suggest that there is no one or nothing worth praising but *Allah*. In this example the word-

for-word translation works perfectly in supporting the fact that Islam preaches that there is only one God.

The translation of the sixth verse is a word-for-word translation using a direct procedure. This is suggested by the construction of the sentence structure in the target language. The phrase *Sikhokele Indlela Elungileyo* is incorrect because when translated in English it will be *Lead us a way that is good*. The sentence is ambiguous to a target audience in that it could suggest that the target audience be led in a good manner instead of being led on a righteous and good path. The word *Sikhokele* in this sentence suggests a command rather than a plea. According to cultural values of the target audience, it is disrespectful for a younger person to demand something from his/her parents. Therefore, the use of the word-for-word translation in this verse violates one of the cultural norms of the target language. This consequently creates a tone of disrespect and it is suggested that the translator has to free himself/herself from the shackles of limitations in order to achieve an acceptable, informative and effective translation by observing the target language linguistic and cultural norms (Abdul-Raof 2001:9). It must be noted that the “shackles of limitation” referred to here are the intrinsic syntactic, semantic and pragmatic differences in languages that lead to cases of both non-equivalence and untranslatability between languages (Abdul-Raof 2001:9).

The *Surah Al Fatihah* teaches a perfect prayer (Ali 1989:13), the word *Sikhokele* is not a proper word to be used by a person who prays, as that person is asking or thanking God. The reason for suggesting that *Sikhokele* is not a proper word is that the word passes a command to God rather than a request or a plea. Its meaning in English would be to lead rather than guide. A suggested proper word to be used is *Sibonise* which suggests guidance.

The seventh verse which is the last verse of the chapter is the longest of the seven verses. And although it is a word-for-word translation, it succeeds to convey the message of the source text.

For readers not familiar with isiXhosa or the Qur'an, a back-translation of the isiXhosa target text is done into English. Below is the word-for-word isiXhosa translation from Arabic.

1. *Ngegama lika-Allah OneNceba OnoBulungisa*

2. *Udumo (Nombulelo) ku-Allah*

*Umphathi walo lonke elimiweyo*

3. *Lowo uNeNceba – unoBulungisa*
  4. *Inkosi Yemini Womgwebo*
  5. *Nguwe wedwa Esimkhonzayo Kwaye Nguwe wedwa esicela kuye uncedo*
  6. *Sikhokele Indlela Elungileyo*
  7. *Indlela yabo wathi wabasikelela*
- Hayi abo bafumene Ingqumbo (yakho) – abo balahlekileyo.*

English:

1. *With Allah's name who has Mercy and Compassion*
  2. *Glory (And gratitude) to Allah*
  3. *That who Has Mercy That who has Justice*
  4. *The king of the day of Judgement*
  5. *It is You Alone We worship and it is You alone that we seek help from*
  6. *Lead (show us) the Way that is good*
  7. *The way of those that You blessed*
- Not those that got (Your) anger – those who are lost.*

The message of this translation is not entirely 'obscured' to a Muslim who is familiar with this *Surah*, but will be confusing to a target audience not familiar with the *Surah*. The isiXhosa word-for-word translation will not make sense to a layperson in the target language. This discussion will continue in Chapter 5 where two translation models will be described, one for a layperson and one for an academic person.

### **3.4.2. English into isiXhosa**

This translation was done by the researcher. The source text is an existing English translation of the Arabic Qur'an. The source text contained footnotes and the translator had to decide whether to translate this as well. The translator decided against translating the footnotes because in the English source text the footnotes explain the context of some terms in Arabic.

When the English was translated into isiXhosa, the words *Merciful*, *Sustainer*, *worship* and *show* (words with footnotes in the English source text) have a clear meaning and can be understood unambiguously.

In the first verse *Egameni lika-Allah, Kakhulu oZukileyo, Kakhulu oneNceba*, the word-for-word method is used with the term *Allah*, borrowed. As in the word-for-word translation from Arabic into isiXhosa the target audience is familiar with this term. Borrowing leads to foreignisation whereby “an author is left at peace and the reader is brought to the author”. In this strategy (foreignisation), it is noted that the translator aims to preserve the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, but only as it is perceived in the translation by a limited readership, an educated elite (Venuti 1991:130). Foreignisation, which may involve lexical and syntactic borrowings and calques, reflects the source language norms and reminds the target culture readers that they are dealing with a translation, thus in some ways bringing them closer to the experience of the foreign text (Munday 2009:189). It is noted that foreignisation may make a text more cryptic and thus harder to access by target readers (Munday 2009:190).

In the second part of the sentence, a literal method of translation is used whereby the text *Most Gracious, Most Merciful* is translated as *Kakhulu oZukileyo, Kakhulu oneNceba*. This is a literal translation because the syntax of the source text is kept unchanged but this leads to an ungrammatical sentence in isiXhosa.

The second verse *Udumo malube ku-Allah, uMlondolozzi noMgcini wamaHlabathi*, conveys the message of the source text. Though there is borrowing and literal translation (*wamaHlabathi*), a target reader would still understand the message. In isiXhosa the word *wamaHlabathi* is slightly confusing because it is not known that there is more than one world as suggested by the translation. However, a Muslim target reader would know that the deeper meaning of the word *wamaHlabathi* is ‘various nations’.

The third verse is translated literally (same as for the second part of the first sentence) and the *word-for-word* translation in this sentence has resulted in a sentence construction that is ungrammatical. The word *Kakhulu* is a descriptive adjective qualifying the word *oZukileyo*. Therefore, by having such a sentence, it is suggested that the descriptive adjective is *oZukileyo* rather than *Kakhulu*, whereas in a grammatical sentence, it would have been *oZukileyo Kakhulu*.

The fourth verse, *Nkosi yoSuku loMgwebo*, kept the syntax of the target language although a word-for-word translation method was used which could lead to a confusing target text. The message conveyed by the translation in the source text is also conveyed in the target language. The translation of this sentence is acceptable as it can be understood, is not misinterpreted and is structurally grammatical (Vinay & Darbelnet 1995:87).

The opposite can be said for the fifth verse, *Wena senza thina ukunqula Kwaye Lwakho uncedo thina funa*. The reason for that is because a literal translation procedure is used in the verse above and as a result the sentence construction in the target language is incorrect. The message conveyed in this verse is confusing and meaningless. The verse creates a lack of cohesion in the text as a whole. Cohesion is defined as the use of grammatical or structural devices to guarantee text integrity and coherence is defined as the conceptual or semantic network that glues the parts of a text together (Fawcett 1997:91). There is no cohesion because here *Wena*, an absolute pronoun, is an object and grammatically, in the target language, the object is placed at the end of a sentence since an object indicates to what or whom a particular action is directed. The two words *senza* and *thina* should not have been used together: the word *thina* is already suggesting who the subject is and *thina* is an absolute pronoun in a plural form of the subject of the sentence. The two last words *thina* and *funa* imply that *Allah* should seek the people instead of the people seeking *Allah* or *Allah's* help.

The sixth verse, *Bonisa thina ethe tye indlela* is a direct translation and though the sentence construction is that of the source text and quite foreign in the target language, the meaning of the translation is acceptable as it can be interpreted correctly (Vinay & Darbelnet 1995:87). However, the verse sounds more like a command to *Allah* than a plea from the believers to *Allah* to guide them. This is suggested by the word *Bonisa* that is used in the verb stem when giving a command to one person (Riordan & Mathiso 1969:76)

The seventh verse is “meaningless”. The word-for-word translation method does not convey any message because the translation does not make any sense:

*Indlela yabo phezu bani*

*Wena onike Lwakho uZuko,*

*Abo zabo (isabelo)*

*Yiyo hayi ingqumbo,*

*Kwaye abo bahamba hayi lahlekileyo*

It is just a collection of words thrown together. In most languages, and especially in the target language, a simple sentence usually has a subject, verb and an object. In the third phrase of the translation, the word in brackets (*isabelo*) being the noun, does not correspond with its possessive pronoun, *zabo*. Here *isabelo* is in the singular form whereas the possessive pronoun *zabo* is in the plural form. It is suggested that there is no link or cohesion between the phrases, for instance the fourth phrase is not linked to the third phrase. The fourth phrase *Yiyo hayi ingqumbo*, suggests a contradiction. *Yiyo* is a copulative that when translated loosely would be 'it is' but, the next word *hayi* is a negative form in the target text and when translated means 'no'. There is no cohesion between the last verse of the paragraph and the verse immediately before it. Furthermore, *Kwaye abo bahamba hayi lahlekileyo* has an incorrect sentence construction in isiXhosa.

In the target language, a sentence cannot start with *And* that when translated is *Kwaye*. The word *Kwaye* is a joining word which means that its purpose is to join two or more sentences in the target language. Therefore, this analysis suggests that it is more problematic to translate the English version of the Qur'an into isiXhosa using the word-for-word strategy. A reason for this might be that the English version of the Qur'an is a translation from Arabic and in a translation of a translation, the message and the meaning of the text will be even further removed from those of the source text.

The back translation of the word-for-word isiXhosa into English reads as follows:

1. *In the name of Allah, Greatly Gracious, Greatly with Mercy.*

2. *Praise must be with Allah*

*The Protector and Keeper of the Worlds;*

3. *Greatly Gracious, Greatly with Mercy;*

4. *Chief of the Day of Judgement.*

5. *You we are doing worship,*

*And Your help we want.*

6. *Show us the straight way,*



7. *The way of those above anyone*

*You gave yours Grace,*

*Those whose (share)*

*Is no anger*

*And those who walk no lost.*

From the back translation it is evident that the word-for-word strategy is not a feasible option when translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa because the back translation seen here is meaningless as it does not convey the same message that is written in the Arabic Qur'an.

### 3.5 Interviews

For this research, the interviews firstly serve as a yardstick to measure whether there is a need for a translation of the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa and secondly to see whether a word-for-word translation strategy could work for translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa. The interviews were conducted with six isiXhosa-speaking Muslims in the Eastern Cape who studied Arabic. The interviewees will be referred to by numbers rather than by their names. The profiles of the interviewees are listed below:

**Interviewee 1** underwent Arabic and Islamic studies at a madressa in Kwa-Nobuhle Islamic Centre for a period of 10 years. He has been a Muslim for 17 years. He reads and understands the Arabic Qur'an and is an Imam at Masjid-Ul-Bilaal in Kwa-Nobuhle. He delivers *khutbas* (Friday sermons) during *jumuah* (Muslim congregational gatherings on Fridays). The interview was conducted in Kwa-Nobuhle Township in Uitenhage on 20 May 2011.

**Interviewee 2** obtained his basic knowledge of Arabic at the Kwa-Nobuhle Islamic Centre under the guidance of Imam Yusuf Umali. He then furthered his studies in Arabic at Springs at an institution known as Jamia-Mahmudia for a year. From 2001 to 2005 he studied Arabic full-time for the first three years and part-time in his final year at New Castle in Durban. In 2006 he studied theology and eloquence in Arabic. Eloquence is seen as a significant aspect of the Arabic grammar. He can speak, write and read Arabic. The interview was conducted in Kwa-Nobuhle Township in Uitenhage on 22 May 2011.

**Interviewee 3** started Arabic studies at Kwa-Nobuhle Islamic Centre from 1994 to date. In 1999 he started memorising the Arabic Qur'an and completed that in 2002. The interview was conducted in Kwa-Nobuhle Township in Uitenhage on 22 May 2011.

**Interviewee 4** studied Arabic grammar at New Castle in Durban in 2007. The interview was conducted in Kwa-Nobuhle Township in Uitenhage on 22 May 2011.

**Interviewee 5** completed Honours in Theology and Arabic at Islamabad University in 1994. The interview was conducted in Kwa-Nobuhle Township in Uitenhage on 22 May 2011.

**Interviewee 6** studied Islam at King Saud University in Riyadh and at the University of Cape Town's Centre for Contemporary Islam. He is currently teaching Islamic Studies at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The interview was conducted via e-mail on 2 June 2011.

The following questions were put to the interviewees. Their answers are summarised directly beneath each question.

**Question 1: Is there a need to translate the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa?**

All the interviewees answered in the affirmative. Interviewee 1 is of the opinion that the Qur'an should be translated into isiXhosa as this would help with the spreading of Islam because such a translation would then be accessible to isiXhosa speaking Muslims. He continues that once the Qur'an is available in isiXhosa, it could be read in a language that is comprehensible to Xhosa-speaking people. He further points out that the Qur'an "has to be translated for relevance purposes, otherwise if it is only kept in Arabic the message will be foreign to Xhosa Muslims and if they speak Arabic they would be accused of following other cultures". Interviewee 1 is referring to the fact that when Xhosa Muslims use Arabic for liturgical and preaching purposes by Xhosa Muslims makes them appear as if they are abandoning their Xhosa traditions in favour of Arabic traditions. Interviewees 2, 3 and 4 point out that the message of the Qur'an is meant to touch the heart. In the absence of being delivered in a language that is understood, this is not possible – hence their support for the translation into isiXhosa. Interviewee 5 is emphatic that the Qur'an has to be "conveyed in a mother tongue". For Interviewee 6, the process of cultural encounters of any kind is always accompanied by translation, and therefore "historically unavoidable". He further observes that this has been the case in the "Islamic encounter with Africa and Africans" where the Qur'an was translated in Wolof and Hausa in West Africa, and Kiswahili in East Africa, with the growth of Islam among the isiXhosa speakers in South Africa, it is only natural that the

Arabic Qur'an would be made accessible in this language". Interviewee 6 sees this "as simply an unavoidable process".

**Question 2: What challenges would be faced if the Arabic Qur'an were directly translated into isiXhosa?**

The interviewees identified some challenges in the translation of the Qur'an into isiXhosa. The biggest challenge in translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa, according to Interviewee 1, is that one word in Arabic can have more than one meaning. For instance the term *nafs*, on the one hand means 'desire,' while on the other hand it means "soul". Therefore, Interviewee 1 further points out, a translator needs to be well-versed in both the Arabic and Xhosa grammar to be able to translate the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa. The latter point is echoed by Interviewee 5 who states that the challenge would be in acquiring people who know both languages and the syntax of both languages. He adds that a person who translates the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa would have to be someone who understands both Xhosa and Arab cultures. For Interviewee 2, a translator would face a big challenge if s/he does not know the history of Islam as the Qur'an was delivered over a period of 23 years. In some instances the Qur'an constitutes God's responses to the challenges and inquiries made by the community of Muslims in the process of the delivery of the Qur'anic message by Prophet Muhammad. Interviewee 3 points to challenges such as the untranslatability of words like *alif laam meema* "because as much as they appear as text, they are just Arabic letters that do not have any meaning. They are equivalent to alphabets in other languages." In a similar vein Interviewee 4 points out that *Surah Yassin* is untranslatable.

Interviewee 6 notes that while it is true that there is no perfect translation, this is only true to some extent. He points out that in order to capture the various nuances of the Arabic language into the language of translation it is crucial that the translation must be done directly from Arabic into the target language (in this case isiXhosa). However, Interviewee 6 argues that this is only part of a more complex process. In his view, indirect or relay translations of the Qur'an for example from English into isiXhosa are "not only based on half-baked work but are, to say the least, unscholarly and do violence to both Arabic and isiXhosa". The challenge though, is to find a critical body of mother tongue isiXhosa speakers who are also well-versed in Arabic and who can undertake the task of a sound translation of the Qur'an into isiXhosa. The unfortunate reality, according to Interviewee 6, is that those trained in Arabic, (even though some might be isiXhosa speakers), are not linguistic experts or deeply

conversant with literary isiXhosa. The same is true for those who might be experts in the isiXhosa language – they hardly have any expertise in Arabic, not to mention Qur’anic studies.

**Question 3: Is the message of the Qur’an available in Arabic and English effectively conveyed to Xhosa Muslims who do not have a command of both languages, especially Arabic?**

All the interviewees point out that there are problems with the fact that the Qur’an is only available to them in Arabic and English. Interviewee 1 points out that it is possible for a person who has been practising Islam and reciting the Qur’anic verses to feel nothing when reciting them because of being alienated by the language. He believes that, in the absence of a clear explanation, there is always uncertainty when a person does not understand what s/he is dealing with.. According to interviewee 5, the lack of availability of the Qur’an in the language of the recipients (in this case Xhosa ) causes practitioners of the faith to follow it blindly, that is “follow(ing) Islam for the sake of following Islam.” Interviewee 2, 3 and 4 point out that the message of the English Qur’an not effectively conveyed in isiXhosa. Interviewee 6 is of the opinion that some of the available translations, limited as they are “tend to be mostly too technical, literal and dry,” and further notes that “what is available, to say the least, is too elementary in style, and fails to capture Islam through the idiom of intelligible isiXhosa”.

**Question 4: Can the vocabulary of isiXhosa adequately accommodate the nuances of Arabic if the Arabic Qur’an should be translated directly into isiXhosa?**

All the interviewees responded in the affirmative, stating that the isiXhosa vocabulary is rich enough to accommodate the nuances of the Arabic language. Reiterating a point raised about the need for the translator to understand both Arabic and Xhosa cultures, Interviewee 1 for instance points out that the term *aqeeqah* can be translated as *imbeleko* into isiXhosa. It must be noted that the suggestion of the use of the word *imbeleko* by the interviewee is made so as to avoid the use of foreignisation since it is suggested taking note of the ritual *aqeeqah* which serves the same purpose as *imbeleko* and it is done almost the same way as there is a slaughtering of a goat/sheep. The existing translations of some other verses unfortunately did not make mention of such a ritual and to be precise the lexical item *aqeeqah*. Interviewee 2 emphasised that there are indeed letters that cannot be translated on their own unless they are in a sentence. While Interviewee 5 says that even though isiXhosa has enough

vocabulary, the challenges of translating one language into another will remain. Interviewee 6 points out that even though he does not have sufficient data on the translation of the Bible into isiXhosa, the translation of the Bible into isiXhosa is a case in point of the “the expansive nature of the language”.

**Question 5: Looking at the existing sample of word-for-word translation of Arabic into isiXhosa you are provided with, would you say that it conveys the same message conveyed in the Arabic Qur’an?**

The interviewees identified some weaknesses with the existing translation. Interviewee 1 observes that in the first verse, the Arabic preposition *Bi* is disregarded as it suggests “in”. Therefore, Interviewee 1 feels the translation for the term *Bismillahi* should be *Egameni* not *Ngegama*. Interviewee 1 also points out that from verse 2 to verse 6 the translator kept the text word-for-word and that the message is conveyed the same as in the Arabic Qur’an. The seventh verse should have been linked to the sixth verse by translating the *Wa* in Arabic into “and” in English, which would have been *nabo* in isiXhosa, not as *Hayi* as suggested in the translation. Interviewee 2 points out that the second part of this verse, *umphathi walo lonke elimiweyo*, has a misleading element in it. This is because, according to Interviewee 2, *elimiweyo* refers to *earth* only whereas the word *Alamin* means *universe* that indicates everything created by *Allah* – the stars, the ocean, the sun, the moon, et cetera. Interviewee 2 suggests that the translation for the second verse should be *Umbulelo kuQamata, uMphathi weZulu noMhlaba*. Interviewee 4 points out that as much as the translation of the other verses in this *surah* conveys the message of the Qur’an, this is not the best strategy to be used in the translation of the entire Qur’an. According to him, some verses were translated well, while in other cases this was not so. Interviewee 5 agrees with him, saying that while he is comfortable with the translation, the strategy will pose a challenge for the translation of the entire Qur’an. Interviewee 6 states that literal and “word-for-word” translations are only a first step in what is otherwise a layered process of refining the language for a clearer translation and meaning. In fact, he points out, “African languages are far more capable of conveying the Arabic Qur’an, and far better than the more mechanistic European languages.” Interviewee 6 continues that the “cultural affinity between Arab and African cultures would help the process of translation even more.”

### 3.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored the word-for-word strategies for translating from Arabic and English into isiXhosa and whether the existing isiXhosa translated from English is representative of the Arabic version, in order to establish whether this strategy is suitable in translating the Arabic Qur'an directly into isiXhosa. A sample of the Qur'an was translated from English into isiXhosa to see which language, either Arabic or English as source, would be more successful. However, the main focus of this chapter is to establish whether a word-for-word translation strategy directly from Arabic into isiXhosa would be feasible when translating the Qur'an. Views from other scholars on word-for-word translation were also dealt with in this chapter.

In addition word-for-word back-translations of the target language into English were done to illustrate that the strategy in question is not an entirely suitable one. Interviews with six Xhosa speaking Muslims from the Eastern Cape have been conducted. These men are mother tongue speakers of the target language and either have or are still studying Arabic as a language and Islam as a religion.

The interviews consisted of five questions put to each interviewee and focused on whether there is a need for translating the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa and whether the word-for-word strategy would do it justice. The point of reference was the word-for-word translation sample. Culture has a tremendous impact on the semantic composition of a given word with conceptual and theological overtones and theological expressions have religious and cultural sensitivities (Abdul-Raof 2005:166). Arabic has many cultural words, and the translation strategy that has to be adopted when encountering cultural words would be to abandon the literal rendering. However, since literal rendering falls under the word-for-word translation method it follows that this method will not be suitable for translating the Arabic cultural words that are in the Qur'an into isiXhosa.

That cultural values can be violated when the word-for-word method is followed was highlighted in the Arabic isiXhosa translation sample provided for this research. It must be taken into consideration that Arabic and isiXhosa are not similar or closely related languages and a word-for-word translation is not the best route to follow. This can be illustrated by the cultural words in Arabic which would best be translated by using a strategy other than the word-for-word one. For example one of the rituals of Islam that must be performed for a newborn, is '*aqeeqah*' whereby a lamb is slaughtered (Abdul-Raof 2005:169). As this word

might be difficult to translate into the target language a similar ritual *imbeleko* is observed in the culture of the target audience. Therefore without using the word-for-word method, it is possible to translate some cultural words from Arabic into isiXhosa. The message of the text should be conveyed rather than the meaning of a text. Thus a communicative translation should take place instead of a semantic translation.

It is suggested that both translation samples and the strategy used to translate them into the target language are not acceptable, because the translation samples are grammatically incorrect and the word-for-word strategy is a 'putative bad consequence of using translation' (Cook, 2010:97). Such translations will only confuse the target audience. Kirk (2005:98) alludes to this fact that "if translations are not perceived as relevant by the receptors, the translations will not be used".

According to Kirk (2005:98) Gutt offers a model of an ideal authentic direct translation without contextual adaptation, but because the contextual barriers to communication are not overcome within a text, the translation will initially be neither understood nor perceived as relevant. That is why Gutt identified the need for footnotes. The researcher agrees that footnotes should be used when translating the Qur'an into isiXhosa to make the context of a particular translation clearer. Abdul-Raof (2001:140) agrees that if there is a need to capture in the target language what is obvious in the Qur'an (source text) and the intentionality (i.e. the intended message) involved in it, the use of footnotes or commentaries is suggested to avoid alienating the target language audience.

To translate the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa, the translator needs to be bilingual and bicultural (Abdul-Raof 2005:172). The researcher understands the term 'bicultural' in this context to mean that a translator should be well versed in the source language culture as much as s/he is well versed within his/her culture. This is not by merely reading about the source culture, but living among that cultural society.

In a previous chapter, various approaches to translation were revised and in this chapter, the word-for-word strategy is analysed. The result is that the word-for-word strategy is not recommended when translating the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa. This does not suggest that the Qur'an is untranslatable from Arabic into isiXhosa, rather that a translator needs to be familiar with the micro-textual and macro-textual features of the source language which constitutes major impediments during the process of translation (Abdul-Raof 2005: 162).

The next chapter will be a comparison between the word-for-word translation samples from Arabic and English into isiXhosa and the existing English and isiXhosa translations of *Surah Al Fatihah* in the Qur'an. This comparison seeks to identify the best and most suitable strategy to use when translating the Qur'an from the source language into the target language.



## Chapter 4

### Discussion of the existing English and isiXhosa translation samples of the first chapter of the Qur'an (Surah Al Fatihah)

#### 4.1 Introduction

One may wonder whether a given translation strategy will be able to capture and penetrate the multiple semantic layers of the Qur'an. One may also wonder which translation approach the translator adopts to relay to the target audience the delicate aspect of cadence through which the Qur'an achieves euphony, the musical sounds present in every verse (Abdul-Raof 2001:39). Various strategies were discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 and these highlighted that there are advantages and disadvantages to each strategy. This was done as part of a search to identify the right translation strategy to be used for translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa

Qur'an translations are generally characterised by what is called "formal overloading" as this often results from the overuse of rare and difficult combinations of words (Abdul-Raof 2001:22). The author further explains that most Qur'an translations keep the same source text word order in the case of foregrounded (clefted) elements. With the above in mind, this chapter will analyse the existing samples of the translation of the Qur'an from Arabic into English and isiXhosa respectively. The analysis of the isiXhosa translation from Arabic will be done parallel to the comparison of the word-for-word translation dealt with in the previous chapter of the research. For isiXhosa, the translation of the first chapter of the Qur'an from *Selected Verses of the Holy Qur'an in Xhosa* by The Ahmaddiya Muslim Mission (South Africa) will be used as reference. It must be noted that although translated verses exist in isiXhosa, these verses are not used in any isiXhosa speaking Muslim community as there are simply not enough text available.

Before comparing the samples with the existing translations, the approaches used in the existing translations will be analysed and identified where after and through the comparison, the best and most suitable approach for translating the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa, must be identified.

There are two major types of translation used in the Qur'an; the first type being semantic translation that adopts archaic language and some literal word order; and the second type is a communicative translation (Abdul-Raof 2001:21). To test whether Abdul-Raof was correct these types will be investigated and applied to the relevant parts of the Qur'an. As already described in Chapter 2.2.2, Newmark (1981:39) defines semantic translation as a translation that attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original. The semantic translation can be linked to Nida's formal equivalence as well. Nida (2000:156) notes that with formal equivalence the attention is on both form and content of the message and with a translation thereof, one is concerned with correspondences such as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept.

However, the communicative translation (referred to in Chapter 2.2.2) is defined as a translation that attempts to produce an effect as close as possible to that experienced by the readers in the original text (Newmark 1981:39). The communicative translation can be linked with Nida's functional equivalence because the translation process has been defined on the basis that the receptors of a translation should comprehend the translated text to such an extent that they can understand how the original receptors must have understood the original text (De Waard & Nida 1986:36).

#### **4.2 Which approach is used to translate Surah Al Fatihah from Arabic into English?**

Abdul-Raof (2001:21) notes that almost all existing English translations of the Qur'an suffer from the drawbacks of literal translations. It is suggested that some of the Qur'an-specific cultural and linguistic features are translation-resistant and therefore constitute interesting translation problems idiosyncratic to the Qur'an (Abdul-Raof 2005:166). The Qur'anic text is rich with liturgical, emotive and cultural key expressions that are lacking in the target language (English). It is not easy to find parallel English expressions because the two languages (Arabic and English) are linguistically and culturally so diverse (Abdul-Raof 2005:172).

The analysis of the existing Qur'an translations is done by referring to three English translations of the Arabic Qur'an. The translators are Yusuf Ali (1983), Muhammad Asad (1980) and N.J. Dawood (1990). The translations were all done directly from Arabic into English and the analysis is of the first chapter of the Qur'an, *Surah Al Fatihah*. The purpose of analysing three translations is to highlight the differences and the similarities in translating

the Arabic Qur'an into English, as it is suggested that there can never be identical translations. The translated text is written below and the translators are referred to as follows: Ali is A; Asad is B; and Dawood is C. The verses are numbered and when a reference is made to a certain translation, a letter representing the translator and a number which represents the verse will be given. For instance: A1, B2 or C3.

## Translation A

**Fātiha**, or the Opening Chapter.

1. In the name of God, Most Gracious,

Most Merciful.

2. Praise be to God,

The Cherisher and Sustainer of

the Worlds;

3. Most Gracious, Most Merciful;

4. Master of the Day of Judgement.

5. Thee do we worship,

And thine aid we seek.

6. Show us the straight way,

7. The way of those on whom

Thou has bestowed Thy Grace,

Those whose (portion)

Is not wrath,

And who go not astray.

### **Translation B**

1. IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE DISPENSER OF GRACE:
2. ALL PRAISE is due to God alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds
3. the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace,
4. Lord of the Day of Judgement!
5. Thee alone do we worship; and unto Thee alone do we turn for aid.
6. Guide us the straight way –
7. the way of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, not of those who have been condemned [by Thee], nor of those who go astray!

### **Translation C**

1. IN THE NAME OF GOD  
THE COMPASSIONATE  
THE MERCIFUL
2. Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe
3. The Compassionate, the Merciful,
4. Sovereign of the Day of Judgement!
5. You alone we worship, and to You alone  
We turn for help.
6. Guide us to the straight path,
7. The path of those whom You have favoured,  
Not of those who have incurred Your wrath,  
Nor of those who have gone astray.

It must be noted that Translation A has a heading whereas Translations B and C do not have headings. This is because they were captured as they appeared in the source texts. In all three

translations, the first verse of *Surah Al Fatihah* is translated differently. Translation A1 reads as follows, “*In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful*”, in translation B1 it reads as follows, “IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE DISPENSER OF GRACE” and in translation C1 it reads as follows,

“IN THE NAME OF GOD  
THE COMPASSIONATE  
THE MERCIFUL”

(Structure and the capital letters are those of the translator).

Two of the Translators (A and B) have used a superlative degree *Most* to refer to different aspects of God’s attribute of *Mercy* (Ali, 1983: 14). They note that the Arabic words *rahmān* and *rahīm* in A1 and B1 are both divine epithets and are derived from the noun *rahmah*, which signifies *mercy*, *compassion* and more comprehensively, *grace* (Ali 1983: 14; Asad 1980:1). The word *rahmān* is translated by both translators as *Most Gracious* whereas they differ in translating *rahīm* because Translator A translated the word as *Most Merciful* and Translator B translated it as *The Dispenser of Grace*.

Since it was suggested by Translator A and Translator B that the words, *rahmān* and *rahīm* signify *mercy* or *grace* (if one can consider the common meanings of these words from both translators), the question is asked as to why they decided on using different terms/phrases in their translations. According to Asad (1980:1) the term *rahmān* circumscribes the quality of abounding grace inherent in, and inseparable from, the concept of God’s *Being* (italics are the author’s), whereas *rahīm* expresses the manifestation of that grace in, and its effect upon, His (God) creation – in other words, an aspect of His *activity*. On the other hand, Ali (1983:14) notes that the attribute *Rahmān* (Most Gracious) is not applied to any but God, but the attribute *Rahīm* (Merciful) is a general term, and may also be applied to Men. The opinions of the authors therefore suggest that a single word can be translated differently depending on the understanding of the context and the interpretation of the term by the translator.

Although Translator C has translated differently from Translator A and Translator B by not using the superlative degree *Most*, it is evident that Translator C also suggests the words *rahmān* and *rahīm* as meaning *compassionate* and *merciful* when translated into English. Abdul-Raof (2001:63) notes that there is a subtle and delicate nuance between the epithets

*rahmān* and *rahīm*. Abdul-Raof suggests that *rahmān* means the *most merciful*, all *compassionate*, *dispenser of grace* and *rahīm* means *most kind*, *full of pity*, *all gentle* and that each epithet enjoys distinct componential semantic features.

It is noted that "sameness cannot exist between two languages" (Abdul-Raof 2005:171). The religious expressions of divinity and pilgrimage, and expressions of moral concepts such as piety and of the hereafter, among other things, conjure up distinct mental images and meanings in the minds of the source language and target language speakers (Abdul-Raof 2005:172). This confirms that it is not an easy task to translate especially when dealing with a sacred text. Abdul-Raof (2005:171–2) citing Larson (1984:180), notes that terms dealing with the religious aspects of a culture are usually the most difficult, both in analysis of the source vocabulary and in finding the best receptor language equivalents.

The translation of A2 is *Praise be to God, as the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds*. B2 is translated as *ALL PRAISE is due to God alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds*. C2 is translated as *Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe*. What is common between the three translations is that the Arabic term *Allah* is translated as *God*. A word such as *Allah* relay distinct messages to different non-Muslim target language readers whose faith provides different theological meanings to the same word (Abdul-Raof 2005:166). Abdul-Raof further states that the word *Allah* has a number of componential features idiosyncratic to Islam and that it designates above all the oneness of God, (i.e. monotheism) who has 99 attributes mentioned in the Qur'an. Translating the word *Allah* into *God* may be problematic to Muslims as they believe that *Allah* is one and does not take a plural form that could be the case with the word *god* when used to refer to idols. Abdul-Raof (2005: 166) also states that the Arabic word *Allah* is translated as *God* which (with lower case letters) can be made plural, thus one can say *gods* in the target language. It is suggested that since the target audience is familiar with the word *Allah*, it should be transferred (borrowed) into the translation as is, so as to avoid any misconceptions. To highlight the divinity and the notion of oneness of God, the Qur'an employs the word *Allah* unique in its grammatical form as it cannot take a plural form, i.e. the oneness of God is backed up by the very morphological form of the word itself (Abdul-Raof 2005:166).

Ali (1983:14) suggests that the Arabic term *Rabb* is usually translated as *Lord* and can also carry the meaning of "cherishing, sustaining, bringing to maturity". Therefore, instead of using the term *Lord* in translation, Translator A decided to use the words *Cherisher* and

*Sustainer*. However, Asad (1980:1) states that the Arabic expression *Rabb* that he (Translator B) rendered as *Sustainer*, embraces a wide complex of meanings not easily expressed by a single term in another language. The term *Rabb* comprises the ideas of having a just claim to the possession of all things and consequently, authority over them, as well as of rearing, sustaining and fostering all things from their inception to their final completion (Asad 1980:1–2). Translator B and translator A agree with the use of the term *Sustainer*. However, it must be noted that Translator B uses emphasis by using the term *alone* to suggest that nobody is worth being praised but *Allah*.

Unlike the Translators A and B, Translator C uses the term *Lord*, which Translator A suggested has many meanings of which one is *cherishing*. In translating the term *Rabb*, Translator C chose not to use repetition as was the case with Translators A and B. As already suggested, Translator C has just given the meaning of the word in his translation. In translation A and translation B the term *worlds* is used by Asad (1980:1) in small letters whereas Ali (1983:14) translated the term with a capital letter. However, both used the plural form. Generally it is known that there is one world, but Ali (1983: 14) notes that there are many worlds – astronomical and physical worlds, worlds of thought, spiritual worlds, and so on. Ali (1983:14) further states that in every one of the worlds, God is all in all. Ali echoes Asad (1980:1) here saying that the term *worlds*, denotes all categories of existence both in the physical and the spiritual sense. This supports the fact that, to those people who have totally surrendered to the will of *Allah*, the Qur'an is a guide on how to conduct themselves.. Dawood's use of the term universe (1990:np) explains in simple terms that *Allah* oversees each and everything on earth and beyond.

The translations of the third verse (A3, B3 and C3) are similar thus the third verse will not be analysed in this section. For the fourth verse, the translators differ in their choice of a word to use as the subject of the verse. In A4 the translation is *Master of the Day of Judgement* B4, the verse is translated as *Lord of the Day of Judgement!* In and in C4 it is translated as *Sovereign of the Day of Judgement!* The first two translators, Translator A and Translator B, respectively used the subject *Master* and *Lord* which can be used to refer to any human being of a high stature. However, Translator C's use of the term *Sovereign* suggests the highest of the highest order. Nevertheless, all three translators agree that regardless of the choice of the term for the subject of the verse, *Allah* oversees and will oversee the *Day of Judgement*.

In B5 and C5, *alone* is added to emphasise that *Allah* is Omnipotent. Translator A's emphatic word in this verse is *worship*. Ali (1983:14) notes that on realizing God's love and care, God's grace and mercy, and God's power and justice (as Ruler of the Day of Judgement), the immediate result is that we bow in the act of worship. The sixth verse runs over to the seventh verse. This is indicated by Translator B's use of a hyphen and Translator A and Translator C's use of a comma between the two verses. The opening of B6 and C6 *Guide* but for A6, it is *Show*. Ali (1983:15) notes that if the translation in English is supposed to be *guide*, the sentence should read as follows: *Guide us to and in the straight Way*, because the believers may be wandering aimlessly and the first step is to find the Way.

B6 and C6 are *Guide us the straight way* and *Guide us to the straight path*. Ali (1983:15) suggests that Muslims should be *guided* once and then it is up to them to keep to the *path/way*. However, for the seventh and the last verse, Translators A, B and C agree that the believers should not go *astray*. The translation for B7 reads as *the way of those upon whom Thou has bestowed Thy blessings, not of those who have been condemned [by Thee], nor of those who go astray!* For A7, the translation reads as follows: *The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, Those whose (portion) Is not wrath, And who go not astray.* In C7, the translation reads as follows: *The path of those whom You have favoured, Not of those who have incurred Your wrath, Nor of those who have gone astray.*

Translator B and Translator C state in B7 and C7 that there are two types of people who may not be favoured by *Allah*; *those who have incurred Allah's wrath* and *those who have gone astray*. However, A7 is not in a negative form and implies that *Allah* has chosen people *whose portion is not wrath and who have not gone astray* – the use of the conjunction *and* refers to two qualities of the people who deserve *Allah's* favour. Translator B and Translator C translated B7 and C7 by using a negative form *Not*. To a degree this indicates that both translators have authority over *Allah* by suggesting people that should be favoured by *Allah*.

It is clear that the same text can be translated differently by different translators. Sanneh (1994:24) states that it is important to spell out the contrasting conditions before considering detailed local contexts for the principle of translatability. Sanneh continues that in several passages the Qur'an bears testimony of its own Arabic uniqueness, and what the authorities call its "inimitable eloquence".

It is suggested that translation B is a communicative translation. A communicative translation attempts to produce an effect on its readers as close as possible to that obtained on the readers



of the original text (Newmark 1980:39). Asad (1980:vi) acknowledges that a communicative translation has been the overriding principle which has guided him (Asad) throughout his work and that the message of the Qur'an must be rendered in such a way as to produce, as closely as possible, the sense which it had for the people who were unburdened by the conceptual images of later Islamic development.

Asad's translation of the Qur'an can also be understood as one that followed De Waard and Nida's functional equivalence since functional equivalence implies that the receptors of the translation should comprehend the translated text to such an extent that they can understand how the original receptors must have understood the original text (De Waard & Nida 1986:36). Asad (1980:vii) further states that in order to bring out, to the best of his ability, the many facets of the Qur'anic message, he has found it necessary to add to his translation a considerable number of explanatory notes as footnotes. This resembles Gutt's direct translation. He supported the idea to keep as close as possible to the source text, but to add explanatory notes by means of footnotes.

On the other hand, Ali believes that his translation of the Arabic Qur'an is an English Interpretation of the Arabic text (Ali 1983: iv). This agrees with Gutt's indirect translation, the functional equivalence of Nida and Newmark's communicative translation. Ali (1983: iv) further notes that the English text shall not be a mere substitution of one word for another, but will be the best expressive and meaningful translation as understood from the Arabic source text. Thus the translator concentrated on the message which he interpreted from the source text during translation.

The above discussion suggests that Translator A used a communicative translation as he attempted to produce for his readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original text (Newmark 1982:39). Ali (1983:v) further points out that where he has departed from the literal translation in order to express the spirit of the original text better in English, he explained the literal meaning in the explanatory notes.

Dawood (1990:xi) on the other hand advises that he has taken pains to reproduce ambiguities wherever they occur, and have provided explanatory footnotes in order to avoid turning the text into an interpretation rather than a translation. This equals semantic and formal equivalence and Gutt's direct translation. Dawood (1990: x–xi) continues that the style and language of the Qur'an has been brought as close to the original as the English grammar and idiom will allow. This suggests that Dawood's translation is a semantic translation because

semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original (Newmark 1980:39).

#### **4.3 Comparison of the word-for-word translation isiXhosa sample to the existing translation sample of other verses of the Qur'an**

In this section attention is given to the comparison of the isiXhosa word-for-word translation sample of Chapter 1 of the Qur'an (*Surah Al Fatihah*) with the translation sample of the same chapter in the verses published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission.

The motivation for doing this is firstly to identify the approach/strategy used to translate the chapter in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission publication, and secondly, to compare whether the strategy/approach used in the latter is better than the word-for-word translation samples referred to in paragraph 3.4. It must be noted that the translation sample analysed in Chapter 3.4 was a word-for-word translation from Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa. With the word-for-word translations the translator was asked to use a specific strategy as was discussed in Chapter 3.

In this sub-paragraph the micro-structural level of the translation will be analysed and the strategy used in the translation identified and compared. The findings between the comparison of the word-for-word translation sample and the sample from the Selected Verses of the Holy Qur'an in isiXhosa will be micro-structurally categorised according to orthography, syntax and semantics in order to illustrate that micro-structural parts in isiXhosa could have semantic implications for the target reader. In this regard Sanneh (1994:24) notes that mother-tongue speakers find themselves in the anomalous position that their language is considered too profane for the decisive acts of the religious code, a consideration that bears little relationship to being fluent in Arabic.

The translation samples are added as Addendum C and Addendum D. Addendum C is the word-for-word translation sample from Arabic into isiXhosa of Chapter one of the Qur'an. The translation was done by Sheikh Tahir Sitoto and his profile is outlined in the interview section in Chapter 3 of the research. Addendum D is a sample from the Selected Verses of the Holy Qur'an translated into English and then into isiXhosa and was taken from a translation of Selected Verses of the Holy Qur'an that was published by Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission. The translator is unknown.

### 4.3.1 Orthography

Capitalisation and punctuation will be the main focus here. In the fourth verse (Addendum D), the translation reads as *UMongameli woMhla woMgwebo*. The word *UMongameli* is written in a grammatically correct form in isiXhosa because both the *U* and the letter “M” is capitalised. The reason for the capitalisation of *U* is that it is a letter at the beginning of a sentence and *M* is written with a capital letter because it is the first alphabet in a noun. Nevertheless, the word *UMongameli* can be translated into *The President* in English; it might also be translated as *The Manager/Supervisor*. This term can be used to refer to any human being who is in a powerful position at a certain institution. The position is what this term is about and it can be occupied by another person after a certain period of time. Therefore, as *Allah* is Omnipotent, the term *Umongameli*, is not a suitable translation for the existence of *Allah*. It is suggested that the term should rather be *UNkulunkulu* which means Almighty.

In Addendum C the same verse was translated as *Inkosi Yemini Womgwebo* which refers to God as the King of Judgement Day. With the first word of the translation the grammatical rule of capitalisation is not entirely kept. This is because the only capitalised letter is *I* at the beginning of the sentence. The next letter *n* is written in the lower case. This violates the capitalisation rule that suggests that the first letter of a noun is written in capital letters. It also shows disrespect to *Allah* as the noun refers to Allah (God) in this verse. Furthermore the word can be understood by the target audience as referring to a chief in the target culture. This is misleading as it implies that *Allah* can be replaced or will cease to exist at any certain time.

Both translators have translated the Arabic/English term *Din/Judgement* as the same as *Womgwebo*. Both translators have violated the capitalisation rule because the letter that was supposed to be capitalised is *m* not *W*. However, for Addendum D, the *Wo* used is the correct subject concord of the possessive pronoun. The subject in this case is *UMongameli* whereas in Addendum C, the subject concord of the possessive does not correspond with its subject *Inkosi*. Grammatically, for the subject *Inkosi*, the subject concord of the possessive pronoun should have been *Yo* and as the result, the correct translation would have been *yoMgwebo*. This has a semantic implication in the sense that a target reader would understand that the term *yomgwebo* is a possessive implying that God is responsible for Judgement Day as compared to *womgwebo* which may imply that God is God of Judgement Day only. The latter meaning suggests that God is responsible for passing judgement only.

When capitalisation is not taken into consideration, it might imply that the noun referred to is not given the status it deserves. For instance in the target language, if the word *nkosi* is written with a lower case *n*, it could refer to any human being in the position of a chief, whereas if the *n* is written in the upper case, it would suggest God

#### 4.3.2 Syntax

In this sub-paragraph the construction of sentences in both translation samples will be analysed. The translation samples will be studied to see whether they have kept the sentence structures of the source texts and what the impact and implication of different sentence structures or unchanged sentence structures are.

The source text and the target text are written in completely different formats: in Arabic, a text is written and read from the right to the left whereas in isiXhosa, a text is written and read from the left to the right. Just by looking at the syntax of the Xhosa translation of Addendum D that has Arabic alongside it, it can be deducted that it is a translation from the English Qur'an because the syntax of the English chapter is followed in the translation. This is proven by the word *Egameni* because *Egameni* suggests *In the name*, and in the target language (isiXhosa), it implies that something is done on behalf of something/someone. Here it suggests that Muslims are praying in the name of *Allah* rather than praying to *Allah*. In Addendum C, the word *Ngegama*, is used that when translated would mean “*with the name*”. This reflects the Muslim belief that one would achieve things if one believes and put one's trust in *Allah*.

In the fourth verse in Addendum C, the translator kept to the Arabic syntax. This is evident in the sense that in Arabic the sentence is *Iyyaka Nabudu Wa Iyyaka Nasta Inu* and that it is translated as *Nguwe wedwa Esimkhonzayo Kwaye Nguwe wedwa esicela kuye Uncedo*. As in the Arabic sentence, the translation has two sentences which are joined by the conjunctive *Kwaye* which is *And* in English and *Wa* in Arabic. The word *wedwa* used repetitively in this translation emphasises that Muslims are ‘only worshipping *Allah* and that they (Muslims) ask help from *Allah*’. The word *wedwa* is a second person quantifier (Du Plessis & Visser 1992:316). It is suggested that the quantifier *wedwa* is used as a modifier of the head noun *nguwe* (Du Plessis & Visser 1992:316). The quantifier *wedwa* in Addendum C is not necessary, because Islam is said to be “one's total submission to the will and the Oneness of *Allah*” and *Allah* is an Arabic word which stands for the One and Only God (Ali 1983: ii). Therefore *wedwa* can be seen as redundant in the translation.

In Addendum D, the sixth verse *Sikhokele emendweni olungileyo* has kept the syntax of the English translation, because the use of the hyphen at the end of this verse creates a link to a following verse. The verse in the source text is written as:

6. Guide us the straight way –
7. the way of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, not  
of those who have been condemned [by Thee], nor of those who go  
astray!

The translation in Addendum D is written as:

6. *Sikhokele emendweni olungileyo* –
7. *Indlela yabo uyibabale ngeemfefe, abo bangayivusanga ingqumbo  
yaKho, neyabo bangalahlekanga*

However, the seventh verse does not suggest any link to the sixth verse, because in the sixth verse the translator used the term *emendweni* which is the synonym of *Indlela* used in the seventh verse. The use of synonyms in this translation implies inconsistency that may send an obscure message since one term should normally be translated with one equivalent. The seventh verse suggests that the believers are guided by *Allah* onto a path of those who have been blessed by *Allah*'s grace and are those who did not evoke *Allah*'s wrath. The researcher does not agree with the translation of the seventh verse as it suggests that God is waiting for a human being who sinned to show his wrath and to punish that person immediately. This is suggested by the use of the word “bangayivusanga” which means “those who did not awake (for a lack of a better word) God’s anger”.

Compared to Addendum C, the translator translated the verse as follows: *Sikhokele (usibonise) Indlela Elungileyo*. The use of the word in brackets (*usibonise*) makes the message of this verse to be easily understood. If the word in brackets was not there, the verse could have been confusing and misleading because when back-translated, it would read *Lead us the good path/way* instead of *Lead us onto the good path/way*. To link this verse to the seventh verse, the translator in Addendum C did not use any punctuation marker, however he used repetition whereby the word *Indlela* which is used in verse six was also used at the beginning of the seventh verse.

When a translation captures the correct syntax of a particular language, the message will be conveyed easier and the translation will be understood by the target reader thereby giving meaning to the translation... In both Addenda, the researcher's findings are that a word-for-word translation is not suitable to translate the Qur'an. It has also been established that even though the translator in Addendum C has studied Arabic as a language, has a vast knowledge of the Qur'an and has studied Islam, the lack of studying isiXhosa academically and mastering the language will be a challenge for translating the Qur'an into isiXhosa. This is deduced because of the many grammatical rules of isiXhosa that were broken in the translation which in turn made the target text difficult to understand.

As for Addendum D, the fact that the sample was translated from an English translation of the Arabic Qur'an is problematic, because in translation there is a loss of meaning. Newmark (1982:7) notes that translation is a craft attempting to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language and that each exercise involves some kind of loss in meaning, due to a number of factors. Another problem identified was the inconsistent translation of the term 'Way' that has been translated as *emendweni* and *indlela* whereas it was used in the same context in both verse 6 and 7. This inconsistency creates confusion.

#### 4.3.3 Semantics

In this sub-paragraph the meaning of words in the translation is investigated. This is necessary because as much as a correct translation of the meaning of a word in context conveys the intended message an incorrect translation regarding the meaning, may convey a misleading message.

In the first verse in Addendum D, the word *Allah* is borrowed from Arabic; reason being that in isiXhosa there is no substitute that suggests the Oneness of *Allah*. The translator added the following explanation at the top of the page: *Kuthe ke ngokungabikho kwegama lesiXhosa elithetha into enye ncakasana neli lasetyenziswa linjalo apha eluguqulweni*. This, when translated says: *Because there is no word in isiXhosa that means exactly the same with the one used, this word is used as such here*. To get to this conclusion the translator must have done some research, however the researcher begs to differ with the translator because even before Christianity and Islam were introduced to the target audience, they (target audience) believed in one Supreme Power which they referred to as *Qamata*. See also Soga (1937:29) that states: *UTHixo lo kwakuthiwa ukubizwa kwakhe nguDali – uQamata*. This when

translated into English means: *It is said that this God was referred to as Dali – Qamata*. The researcher suggests that the term *Qamata* should have been used in Addendum D, as the target audience is familiar with and can relate to this term.

The translator in Addendum D used the words *uSolufefe* and *uSozinceba* for the attributes to *Allah*. In the target language, both these words are gender specific and refer to a male person. By using these terms in referring to *Allah*, it is suggested that *Allah* is a human being and more specifically, a male. However, as explained in the paragraph above, the name that could have been given to *Allah* is *Qamata*, a term that is not gender specific.

In the target language, unlike in the English version of the Qur'an, the translator of this chapter in isiXhosa did not use the “superlative particle (most)” (Abdul-Raof 2001:41). The researcher would like to suggest that the effect of not using this superlative particle (most) in the target language is that these two words can be used to refer to any human being who is understood to be deserving of such attributes. This implies that any human being can have mercy but this mercy is short-lived as human beings are mortal, whereas *Allah* is ever present and *Allah*'s mercy does not cease to exist. The effect of not using the superlative particle *most* can thus imply that *Allah*'s mercy is not that important. However, the use of the word *most*, translated as *kakhulu*, would suggest that *Allah* is beyond these attributes, unlike a human being who might fall short in doing things and who will eventually cease to exist. In Addendum C, the translator also omitted the superlative particle (most) and instead used *OneNceba* and *OnoBulungisa*. By doing so, the word-for-word translation describes the attributes to *Allah* without attempting to measure these attributes.

The next verse in Addendum D opens with *Makabongwe*, this is a word constructed from the verb stem *bonga* which means to *sing praises*. According to the target language culture, praises were and are sung to people like kings, chiefs, etc. The duty of a praise singer is to praise, warn, and rebuke the person to whom the words are directed. In Addendum C, this verse begins as *udumo (nombulelo)*. According to the target language, this translation of the Arabic term *Al-hamdulilahi* conveys into the target language, the same message as in the source language. This can be linked to Nida's functional equivalence. Out of context, *udumo (nombulelo)* can be translated in English as *fame (and gratitude)* however in context this can be translated as *praise (and gratitude)*.

The third verse in Addendum D is a repetition of the attributes of *Allah* and again the superlative particle *most* is not used. However, in Addendum C, the translator used a



demonstrative pronoun *Lowo* to emphasise that these attributes are not directed to anyone but to the *God of Mercy and Justice*. This is suggested in the translation *Lowo UneNceba Lowo unoBulungisa*. The researcher agrees that in this verse Addendum C has captured the message of the Arabic verse.

In the fourth verse in Addendum D the word *woMhla* is used, whereas in Addendum C it is translated as *Yemini*. Both these translations are supposed to be a translation of the Arabic word *Yawmi*. The first translation *Womhla* has a misleading connotation because if translated into English it would mean *date* and this implies a specific calendar day. The translation of this word in Addendum C is also misleading because the word *Yemini* suggests that the day of judgement would be during the day, whereas nobody is said to know at what time or on which day judgement will take place. Therefore, none of these translations captures the essence of the message. Suggestions for a better term for this would be discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

In the fifth verse in Addendum D the translation reads as follows: *Nguwe kuphela esimnqulayo, ikwanguwe esicela uncedo kuYe* whereas in Addendum C it is captured as *Nguwe wedwa Esimkhonzayo Kwaye Nguwe wedwa esicela kuye uncedo*. In Addendum D, the translator did not use repetition as is the case in the Arabic text or English text but instead the translator used the word *kuphela* which suggests ‘only’ and is emphasising the fact that Muslims believe in one God. The use of the word *ikwanguwe* also suggests that ‘it is again from Allah that Muslims seek help’. Lastly, the word *kuYe* is a locative formed with a locative prefix *-ku* with the absolute pronoun *Yena* for the first person singular, whereby the stabiliser *-na* is thrown away (Zotwana 1991:77). In Addendum C the repetition of the term *wedwa* in the translation seeks to emphasise that *Allah* is the One to be praised and to for ask assistance. The use of *Kwaye* in the translation in Addendum C also seeks to intensify that there is no one else from whom Muslims seek help but *Allah*.

In the sixth verse in Addendum D, the word *emendweni* is confusing as it may also suggest *in marriage*. This word is constructed from the noun *umendo* and it is used as an adverb of place. This is archaic Xhosa and can only be understood by elderly people; isiXhosa Muslims belonging to a younger and newer generation will not relate to the term and as a result the message will be “obscure”.

In Addendum C in the seventh verse, the translator did not use the negative form as strongly as was done in Addendum D. The only word used that suggests negation is the word *Hayi*,



whereas in Addendum D, the translator used words like *bangayivusanga* and *bangalahlekanga*. In the seventh verse of Addendum C, *Indlela yabo wathi wabasikelela Hayi abo bafumene Ingqumbo (yakho) – abo balahlekileyo*, the translator put emphasis on people who are supposed to benefit from Allah's guidance. The phrase *Indlela yabo wathi wabasikelela* shows that the translator put more emphasis on the people as compared to the verse in Addendum D where it is translated as *Indlela yabo uyibabale ngeemfefe*. This translation suggests that the *path*/*way* that the Muslims are supposed to follow is blessed by Allah's grace.

Another difference between the two translations is that in Addendum C, the translator used a possessive form from an absolute pronoun *yabo* which is qualified by the phrase *wathi wabasikelela* whereas in Addendum D, the translator used *yabo* with *uyibabale ngeemfefe* whereby the emphasis is on *Indlela*.

In the seventh verse in Addendum C, the translator used the possessive *yaKho* as a qualificative that normally describes a noun and in this case the noun is *ingqumbo* (Zotwana 1991:102). It is further suggested that *yaKho* is the possessive which is formed from an absolute pronoun from a second person singular *wena* with a possessive stem *kho* (Zotwana 1991:104). The stem of a possessive formed from an absolute pronoun is the absolute pronoun minus its stabilizer and the given example in this paragraph is an exception as its possessive stem is structurally different (Zotwana 1991:104). Against this background the orthographic rule for the word *yaKho* is broken, because it is the first letter of the possessive stem *K* that is capitalised instead of the *y* as a possessive concord.

The punctuation rule in the target language is also violated in the seventh verse, because the translator used a comma after the word *yaKho* and following that, the word *and* is used which is suggested by *ne* from the word *neyabo*. The translator therefore listed more than one thing whereas he/she is still referring to the same thing which is the *path* rather than different people who have committed different sins as suggested by the translation. This orthographic implication will also have a semantic implication. The meaning here will obscure the message because the translation reads as if there is Allah's anger and there is also anger of those who are lost. As already stated, this should have conveyed the message that Allah guides those who do not sin to the right path.

The phrase *abo bangayivusanga ingqumbo yaKho, neyabo bangalahlekanga* in Addendum D suggests *those that have not evoked your wrath and that of those who are not lost*. The word

*neyabo* is a possessive formed from an absolute pronoun. The fact that the translator has chosen to distinguish between the two wrong-doings as suggested by the translation by using *abo bangayivusanga* and *neyabo bangalahlekanga* conveys a message that these are the sins that *Allah* punishes, whereas each and every sin is and will be punishable. Therefore the message in this verse is obscured. When compared to the verse in Addendum C where the translator highlighted the negative form by using *Hayi* to show that the *path/way* referred to is not meant for those who evoke *Allah*'s wrath. This suggests that any sin a Muslim commits evokes *Allah*'s wrath and therefore one has to pay for that sin. The translator qualified the translation by being direct in using the translation *abo balahlekileyo*. The use of *abo balahlekileyo* suggests that those people are lost and might find their way back to the will of *Allah*. The word *abo* is a demonstrative pronoun of the second position and is formed from the first position by suffixing *-o*. Since this is from a strong class, the addition of *-o* results in the deletion of the final vowel of the first position demonstrative (Zotwana 1991:36–7). The use of this demonstrative pronoun is to give an indication of the noun referred to and it is used without a noun in this translation sample (Zotwana 1991:36). This demonstrative pronoun is also used to emphasise the people referred to.

It is clear from the comparison of these translation samples that translations of the same text are never identical and each translation has its own shortcomings and strengths. The question to ask would be which one worked best at conveying the message?

#### **4.4 Is the strategy used in the existing translations suitable to translate the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa?**

The translation strategy of borrowing used in Addendum D is not suitable for the translation of the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa. The translator borrowed the term *Allah* whereas there is a suitable term *Qamata* which is known to the target audience. It is suggested that the borrowing of a term when a possible translation exists, might be intended to retain the “shade of specificity” of the foreign object or institution (Fawcett 1997:34). This does not suggest that the word *Qamata* does not have the “shade of specificity”, since in the target language the word is not given to a human being and is “specific” as it refers to the Almighty.

Interviewee 5 suggests that the translation is done word-for-word as illustrated in the seventh verse, *Indlela yabo uyibabale ngeemfefe, abo bangayivusanga ingqumbo yaKho, neyabo*

*bangalahlekanga*. Interviewee 5 queries the meaning of this verse citing that there is no link in the sentence with the sixth verse. The opinion of Interviewee 5 is supported by Interviewee 1, namely that a word-for-word strategy is used. Interviewee 1 also points out that the last verse should have been joined to the previous verse by using *And* which would have been a translation of Arabic ‘*Wa*’. The translation of the linking word *Wa* into the target language would convey the same message as the sixth and the seventh verses even if it was a word-for-word strategy as the use of *Wa* would eliminate the inconsistency in the translation of the word ‘way’.

Interviewee 5 further suggests that the strategy used in the entire chapter is literal translation. This is rare to be used in languages that are not related, but always welcome when a text can go from one language into another with no changes other than those required by the target language grammar (Fawcett 1997:37). Nevertheless, a literal translation is not an entirely suitable strategy to be used for the entire Qur’an as the Arabic Qur’an is filled with cultural connotations and idioms.

The Qur’an, as the word of God, must communicate with the target readers as it entails a message for the followers of a religion. Source text authors intend to communicate a message to their audiences and the aim of a translation, according to functional equivalence, is to communicate the same message to a modern target audience in a different language and a different cultural context (Kirk 2005:91). Kirk (2005:92) further notes that communication of the message is given priority over resemblance of the translation to the original text; stylistic considerations are not ignored, but they are secondary. As literal and word-for-word strategies tend to keep the “stylistic consideration” of the source text, these strategies will not do justice to the message that is carried in the Qur’an and as a result, using a strategy of literal or word-for-word translation would not always convey the accurate message of the text.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter concentrated on analysing translation samples (Addendum C) and one of the existing translated verses of the Qur’an (Addendum D). Addendum C is the word-for-word translation sample from Arabic into isiXhosa of Chapter one of the Qur’an. The translation was done by Sheikh Tahir Sitoto. Addendum D is a sample from the Selected Verses of the

Holy Qur'an translated into English and then into isiXhosa and was taken from a translation of Selected Verses of the Holy Qur'an that was published by Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission. The translator is unknown.

The strategies applied to the above translations were discussed to establish whether the same strategies would be feasible for the translation of the entire Qur'an from Arabic directly into isiXhosa. Aspects of the samples were analysed in order to see whether there were no violations of grammatical and orthographical rules, particularly of the sample in isiXhosa. If orthographical rules are broken the spelling of a particular lexical item can "obscure" the message in isiXhosa. For example: The word *bonga* for example means to praise whereas *bhonga* means a sound made by a cow. Between the two words, the first *bonga* would be suitable in a holy text whereas *bhonga* would not make any sense.

Historically the first translations of the Qur'an appeared in Persian and were undertaken by Persian converts to Islam. The translations were technically conceived as commentaries and based on a strategy of word-for-word translation where the syntax of the Qur'anic verses were kept intact but were supplemented with extensive commentaries (Abdul-Raof 2001:20). Abdul-Raof further notes that these first translations produced an effect of alienation in Persian readers.

Literal translation of religious texts can confuse the target language reader and provide the wrong socio-cultural presuppositions (Abdul-Raof 2001: 28). Therefore, translating the Qur'an, requires a thorough exegetical analysis and reference to exegetical works, otherwise the meaning of the Qur'an will be distorted and drastically misrepresented in the target language (Abdul-Raof 2001: 30). All languages differ in form, and it is therefore quite natural that the forms must be altered if one is to preserve the message content (Nida & Taber 2003:5). Some of the translators of the Qur'an whose works are accessible to the Western public can be described as outstanding scholars in the sense of having mastered the Arabic grammar and achieved considerable knowledge of Arabic literature (Asad 1980:iii). However, most translations of the Qur'an are source-oriented; accommodating the target audience is not generally favoured given that the Qur'an is the Word of God, revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad (Mustapha 1998:229).

The translation samples compared and analysed in this chapter have shortcomings and shortfalls, as a result it is difficult to adopt a strategy based on what was used to translate the texts and that should be applied for the translation of the entire Arabic Qur'an. Furthermore

and as mentioned in Chapter 1 of the research, a translated isiXhosa Qur'an is not yet in place. However, from the existing English translation, the word-for-word translation sample in isiXhosa and the translation in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission publication in isiXhosa it could be proven that these texts are all source-oriented and more semantic translations than being communicative. Should a decision be made to translate the entire Qur'an into isiXhosa, the translation process would have to be handled cautiously.

In Chapter 5, a model for translating the Qur'an is drawn up and annotated and a response to the research questions posed in Chapter 1 of this study is compiled.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Translation as an activity has a tradition reaching far back to the beginnings of recorded history and beyond that to the oral tradition (Schäffner & Wiesemann 2001:4). Ricci (2011:31) also notes that rendering texts from one language into another – what is conventionally referred to as translation – has no doubt been a powerful force throughout human history for as long as it has been practised, allowing the circulation and diffusion of

scientific, technological, linguistic, and literary knowledge across great geographical and cultural distances. Ricci (2011:31) continues that in the realm of religion, the force of translation has been particularly evident, with the translation of scriptures and related works initiating and sustaining the spread of religions far from their places of origin, and altering societies' ways of life and understandings of the human and divine.

The reason for this study is to investigate whether it would be feasible to translate the Arabic Qur'an directly into isiXhosa. In Chapter 1 it was pointed out that the Qur'an was verbally delivered in Arabic to Prophet Muhammad (Mustapha 2009:225). The geographical setting of where the Qur'an was delivered to the Prophet is totally different from where the target audience referred to in this research is. The difference between the languages and the fact that the target audience does not understand either the language or the culture of Arabic, is proof enough that a translation of the Qur'an is required for isiXhosa speaking Muslims. Knowing this, it must be noted that every translation of the Qur'an has at some point had to confront the issue of its own legitimacy in addition to the usual questions of accuracy, relevance and stylistic impact (Mustapha 2009:229).

In this chapter, the researcher gives an overview of the previous chapters, discuss the research questions and responds to the research questions posed in Chapter 1 hereof. The approaches and strategies suggested in the literature review are considered in order to make suggestions on what might be the most appropriate when translating the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa.

Two separate translations of the same chapter of Arabic verses from the Qur'an are translated into isiXhosa by the researcher in this chapter. The first translation accommodates a layperson or any person who wants to read the Qur'an in isiXhosa. The second one will be more technical as it is meant for academics and people who want to analyse the isiXhosa interpretation of the Qur'an. These are new translations as mention has been made that there is no translation of the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa as yet. The approaches used in these translations are different from the word-for-word and semantic translations. The domestication strategy and the functionalist approach have mostly been applied.

According to Mtuze (1998:41) people from diverse backgrounds are bound to have some differences in their interpretation of certain concepts. Therefore the translations here are of different chapters from the Arabic Qur'an already translated into English and thereafter into

isiXhosa. For instance, the translations are of *Surah An-Nas* (Mankind) and have been done directly from Arabic for people who speak the target language but have different academic backgrounds, with the other prepared for a lay-person and the second, for an academic who intends to analyse the translated verse. English back translations of the two translations in isiXhosa were also done. These translations are then briefly discussed and the English back translations are compared to Yusuf Ali's English translation of the same chapter.

This is followed by a model on how to translate the entire Arabic Qur'an directly into isiXhosa based on the translation of *Surah Ikhlāas* which has been annotated according to the Nord model.

Lastly concluding remarks on the entire study are made and other/further research topics are indicated.

## 5.2 Overview of the previous chapters

In the first chapter of the study a brief outline of the history of the Islamic faith was given. Particular attention was paid to the history of Islam in Africa and the cultural implications on Africans embracing Islam. A definition of Islam was given and the issue of translating the Qur'an and its challenges were discussed. The problem statement of the study was made and research questions posed. The methodology and theoretical background of this study was also explained. Feedback concerning interviews conducted with six isiXhosa-speaking Muslims from the Eastern Cape who have studied Arabic were summarised and the profiles of the interviewees were listed as well as the questions asked and answers given, were provided.

Chapter 2 consists of a literature review. It was mentioned that books and journal articles consulted did not yield anything about the translation of the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa but yielded material relevant to the study. The issue of the "untranslatability" of the Arabic Qur'an as well as the challenges of Arabic as a language of religion to non-Arabic speakers were discussed. The approaches of Nida, Newmark, Venuti and Vermeer were discussed as well as the criticism of other scholars for and against the approaches of these four scholars.

Chapter 3 consists of an analysis of word-for-word translation samples of the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa and from the existing English translation into isiXhosa. Newmark's

communicative and semantic approaches were discussed in comparison to Nida's functional and formal equivalence approaches. The purpose of Chapter 3 was to establish whether a word-for-word strategy would be suitable to translate the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa. Definitions of the word-for-word strategy by other scholars were discussed and different views of other scholars on the strategy were also discussed. For each word-for-word translation sample, a word-for-word back translation and comments on the back translation were provided.

In Chapter 4 a discussion of the existing English and isiXhosa translation samples of *Surah Al Fatihah*, the first chapter of the Qur'an was held. For the English samples, three translation samples from Arabic into English, were analysed. An isiXhosa translation sample from *Al Ahmaddiya*'s other verses of the Qur'an was analysed. Then the isiXhosa sample from other verses of the Qur'an was compared to the word-for-word isiXhosa translation sample discussed in Chapter 3. A question about whether or not the strategies used in the samples were suitable to translate the Qur'an was posed and answered.

### **5.3 Research questions**

The following research questions asked in Chapter 1 are discussed in the sub-sections below.

#### **5.3.1 The challenges facing a translator when translating the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa**

The translation problems discussed in this study are objective problems which can be identified in the source text before the actual production of the target text starts. These must not be confused with subjective difficulties a translator may have due to deficient translation competence (Schäffner & Wieseemann 2001:24). The problems are classified into four main types: pragmatic, intercultural, interlingual, and text-specific translation problems (Schäffner & Wieseemann 2001:24). These problems will be discussed in detail in paragraph 5.5 which covers the text annotation of a translation model from Arabic into isiXhosa.

Before the challenges are addressed it is important to note that "another factor to be taken into consideration is the different circumstances in which the translation will be used" (Nida 1982:21). In translation one is always dealing with texts which have been defined as communicative occurrences characterised by standards of textuality (Schäffner & Wieseemann



2001:25). The purpose of this research is to establish whether or not it is feasible to directly translate the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa.

The biggest challenge to be faced in translating the Qur'an from Arabic into another language would be the translator's command of the Arabic language (Lacunza-Balda 1993: 236). In the interviews conducted with isiXhosa-speaking Muslims interviewee 1 stated: "one word in Arabic can have a double meaning." Therefore, a word cannot necessarily be translated to what comes to mind first.

In addition the grammatical structure of the Qur'an is very specific to it and in many cases different from the grammatical structure of the non-Qur'anic Arabic (Mustapha 2009:226).

Another challenge is that a translator has to know the history of Islam because the Arabic Qur'an was delivered over a period of 23 years. At times the Qur'an constitutes God's responses to the challenges and inquiries made by the community of Muslims in the process of the delivery of the Qur'anic message by Prophet Muhammad (Mustapha 2009:225). This suggests that the Arabic Qur'an as a source text, was produced and received at a specific place and time in the source culture and therefore, the situationality of the source text should be taken in consideration (Schäffner & Wieseemann 2001:25).

The observation has also been made that even if a translator was a target language speaker of isiXhosa, it would be a challenge if s/he has not studied the target language further and does not get to speak the language daily.

Another challenge would be that as the Arabic Qur'an was revealed over a period of 23 years, to have the Qur'an translated into isiXhosa, would not require one translator but as it was suggested by the sixth interviewee, a "body of mother tongue isiXhosa speakers who are well-versed in Arabic so as to produce a sound translation of the Qur'an".

Apart from the above, a translator need not be fluent in both languages only, but has to be familiar with the cultures of both the source language and the target language and must have done Qur'anic studies. wa Thiong'o's (1993:92) assertion that African languages are "our own mirrors in which to observe ourselves" gives a clear indication of the close relationship between culture and language. Within this context the so-called "false friends" are another serious problem that may arise from the literal rendering of a culturally-nuanced word

(Abdul-Raof 2005:165). For instance, an owl is regarded as a wise bird in the Arabic culture (Abdul Raof 2005:165) whereas in a Xhosa culture, the bird represents a bad omen and evil.<sup>1</sup>

A translator will also be faced by Qur'an-specific cultural expressions as well as Qur'an-specific linguistic patterns that cannot be domesticated by the target language linguistic norms (Abdul-Raof 2005:162). For instance, it is noted by Abdul-Raof (2005:163) that brushing teeth for an Arab is associated with *miswaak* (a stick taken from the roots of a special tree). A translator into isiXhosa would have to find an equivalent term for the *miswaak* in isiXhosa, which could be using toothpaste and toothbrush or ash and a cloth. If these are used as equivalent terms, the translation would be domesticated.

Another challenge would be the connotative associations underpinning the message of other expressions that are denotatively similar but are connotatively distinct from one culture to another (Abdul-Raof 2005:164). Culture is the way of life and its manifestations peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression (Newmark 1988:94). For instance in Arabic culture, a dog is regarded as dirty by Arab Muslims to an extent that if a dog touched one's clothing, one cannot pray wearing the same clothes (Abdul-Raof 2005:164). However, in a Xhosa culture, a dog is regarded as a symbol of an ancestor and should be treated with respect and dignity<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, how does a translator, when confronted with such words as *dog* in the translation of the Qur'an, translate the connotation of the word in context without violating any of the two cultures? Would s/he, as an isiXhosa speaker, choose to stick to an isiXhosa cultural connotation of the word or would s/he adopt the Arabic cultural connotation? A response to this question is supplied in 5.3.2 below.

Another challenge is the fact that some of the Qur'anic-specific cultural and linguistic features are translation-resistant and therefore constitute interesting translation problems idiosyncratic to the Qur'an (Abdul-Raof 2005:165–6).

Notwithstanding these challenges the Qur'an must be flexible enough to accommodate innumerable cultural situations because of its claims to be universally beneficial to those who believe (Wadud-Muhsin 1992:6). The problems or challenges highlighted in this section are addressed with suggestions of possible solutions in the following paragraph.

<sup>1</sup> The researcher grew up in a community that believes in this.

<sup>2</sup> The researcher grew up in a community that believes in this

### 5.3.2 How can these challenges be overcome?

It is suggested that there should be an established translation body that will be dealing with the specific task of translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa. This body should consist of translators who are well versed with the cultural and linguistic aspects of both Arabic and isiXhosa. This happened with the Afrikaans Bible translation project. The First Afrikaans Language Movement evolved as an attempt to translate the Bible into Afrikaans, it was not about promoting Afrikaans in general as a written language, but the translation of the Bible into in particular (Ponelis 2002:283). To relate to the context of the Qur'an as the guide to Muslims it is also suggested that the translators in this translation body should be Muslims. Mustapha (2009:227) agrees and notes that any attempt at translating the Qur'an is essentially a form of exegesis, or is at least based on an understanding of the text and consequently projects a certain point of view, hence the preference given to Muslim as opposed to non-Muslim translators. It is also important that the translator/s should be well versed with the history of Islam in order to be able to translate the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa. The reason for this is that the revelation of the Qur'an was a response to different contexts or events. In this regard Ricci (2011:34) observes that the tradition of encounters between Muhammad and the Jews goes back to the Qur'anic passages in which the Prophet was given answers to the questions posed to him by visiting Jews.

The team of translators needs to be familiar with the micro-textual and macro-textual features of the Arabic language as this could constitute major impediments during the process of translation (Abdul-Raof 2005:162). It is suggested that the context of culture and the natural habitat for words, need to be preserved in order to achieve a successful ethnographic translation (Abdul-Raof 2005:163). For instance the connotation of the word *dog* as referred to in 5.3.1, is not used in the context of an Arabic culture but in a Qur'anic context. If a translator wants to bridge a gap between two cultures, s/he must look for analogies between the two cultures (Nord 2001:194). The two cultures referred to in this study are the Arab culture and the Xhosa culture. This means that a translator should not only consider the Arabic cultural context of a language but also the translation process embedded in the Qur'anic context. This is supported by Abdul-Raof (2005:164) who notes that the word *kelb*, an Arabic term for *dog*, also appears in an Arabic vulgar expression, and that the reference to *dog* is made in the Qur'an Q7:176 (Chapter 7: Verse 176), but that the connotative meaning of the word differs from the Arabic vulgar meaning.

The translators of the Qur'an do not only need a sound linguistic competence of the source language and the target language but also an advanced knowledge of Arabic syntax and rhetoric in order to appreciate the complex linguistic and rhetorical patterns of Qur'anic structures (Abdul-Raof 2001:2). The cultural situation in both languages must be known in translating and the words which designate the closest equivalence must be employed (Abdul-Raof 2001:113). An example of this kind of situation as already referred to in the section above, is that of an owl. A translator should be aware that, if an Arab man is referred to as or compared to an owl, this would suggest that the man is wise (Abdul-Raof 2005:165).

The discussion in this section concludes that the problems that may and will arise when translating the Arabic Qur'an directly into isiXhosa can and may be solved by using the strategies/approaches discussed in the section below.

### **5.3.3 Strategies/approaches to be used when translating the Qur'an from Arabic into isiXhosa**

Texture is generally at the heart of every translation process and the translation of the Qur'an in particular (Abdul-Raof 2001:109). Abdul-Raof explains that the translation of texture is an intricate negotiation of textural features and it is a delicate process of accommodating meaning within a new linguistic and rhetorical framework. Qur'anic translations adopt a variety of styles and strategies in terms of both format and content (Mustapha 2009:229) and the Qur'anic text is built up of cohesive linguistic and rhetorical elements that make it (Qur'an) hang together (Abdul-Raof 2001:107). Abdul-Raof (2001:108) continues that the Qur'an is an independent genre in its own right; it is a genre in the sense that it exclusively enjoys prototypical linguistic and rhetorical underlying recurrent features. This emphasises the fact that a translator should understand the deeper meaning of the text when translating it and not attempt to translate literally. Abdul-Raof (2001:110) alludes that target language texture has to be governed by target language linguistic and rhetorical norms of texture in order to achieve acceptability, rhetorical stimuli, purposeful communication, and a response in the target language reader similar to that generated by the source language in its audience.

Mustapha (2009:229) clarifies that as far as format is concerned, many translations are printed in the form of parallel texts with the Arabic text facing the translation, with some printed on the same page while other editions print the parallel text on opposite pages.

According to Mustapha (1998:203) this is so because parallel texts of this type serve various purposes, such as confirming the secondary role of the translation while ensuring the presence of immediate and direct means of cross referencing and verification. However, the most important motivation of parallel texts is that “translations of meanings ... should be printed next to the text concerned” (Mustapha 1998:203). It must be kept in mind that any translation of the Qur’an would never be called Qur’an but rather “interpretations of the meanings of the Qur’an” (Abdul-Raof 2005:162) and that is why the source text should always be present next to the target text.

Nevertheless, Abdul-Raof (2001:110) observes that it is important for practitioners to note that the translation of the sensitive Qur’anic text into a different language and culture does not always require one to keep the source language and linguistic and/or rhetorical constituents of texture intact, and that sometimes the target language and linguistic/rhetorical constituents of texture have to be employed. Abdul-Raof (2001:110) further explains that target language texture has to be governed by target language linguistic and rhetorical norms of texture in order to achieve acceptability, rhetorical stimuli, purposeful communicative interaction, and a response in the target reader similar to that generated by the source language in its audience. This suggestion by Abdul-Raof is similar to Newmark’s communicative translation which Newmark defines as that which “attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original”. This is also true for Nord’s instrumental and Venuti’s domesticated texts. Abdul-Raof (2001:182) clearly states that since the major objective of the Qur’an is to broadcast the message of the Qur’an, a communicative translation strategy should be adopted to relay to the target audience the meanings of the Qur’an rather than providing an archaic diction that can alienate the target reader. The latter would be a foreignising approach. Communicative interaction and communicative translation are suggesting the same as Nida’s *functional equivalence*. De Waard and Nida (1986:36) note that the receptors of a translation should comprehend the translated text to such an extent that they can understand how the original receptors must have understood the original text.

It has already been stated that for Muslims the Qur’an is the word of God and that its theological message transcends the boundaries of the Arab peninsula and carries the universal message to all mankind regardless of their language and race (Abdul-Raof 2005:162). Therefore this universal message should be heard and understood by the target reader in his/her target language in the same way that the source reader understood it in the source

language. Wadud-Muhsin (1992:6) notes that to force the Qur'an to have a single cultural perspective – even the cultural perspective of the original community of the Prophet – severely limits its application and contradicts the stated universal purpose of the Book itself. In some cases, more specifically with cultural expressions, a translator should use transliteration as it is justified in the Qur'an translation since “loan words may be necessary when there is a great deal of difference between the two cultures” (Abdul-Raof 2001:150).

There are three strategies that the study pays particular attention to. These are: formal versus *functional equivalence*, *domestication* versus foreignisation and functionalist or skopos theory. Discussion and comparison of these took place in the review chapter. Here attention is given to the strategy or strategies that are best to use in translating the Arabic Qur'an directly into isiXhosa. This could be one of the strategies mentioned above or a strategy that was not discussed. In attempting to answer this question, this study will state why preference is given to a certain strategy or strategies, and why not to others.

If communication of meaning is a priority, cultural equivalence may sometimes offer the best solution in translation (Long 2005:5) because holy texts are full of culturally or liturgically specific terms; these linguistic spaces are often already occupied in the target language. This means that the target language has words to convey these cultural and liturgical specific terms which therefore will not create problems to translate into the target languages. Abdul-Raof (2005:165) suggests that the translation strategy one needs to adopt when encountering cultural words is to abandon the literal rendering and adopt a cultural transposition which allows for the transfer of the underlying connotative, cultural or emotive associations of the source language word to the target language culture. For instance the term *aqeeqah*, which is an Islamic and Arabic ritual whereby a sheep is slaughtered for a newborn (Abdul-Raof 2005:169) is equivalent to a ritual performed by the target audience known as *imbeleko*.

Conceptual Qur'anic expressions are unique cases that portray a specific Islamic culture scenario (Abdul-Raof 2005:166). An example of what has been suggested by Abdul-Raof is the word *Allah* which relays distinct messages to different non-Muslim target readers. If a translator would loan the term *Allah* in a translation into the target language, the response to non-Muslims would be an image of a foreign *God*. The target language isiXhosa e.g. has an equivalent term to *Allah* and this term is *Qamata*, which acts the same as *Allah*, depicting the oneness of God. Delexicalised expressions are suggested to be the source language black holes that refer to lexical items lacking in the target language, in other words lexical voids

(Abdul-Raof 2005:168). According to Abdul-Raof such expressions are transliterated, domesticated, or periphrastically translated and followed by an exegetical within-the-text note. It is suggested that when translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa and to narrow the gap of cultural unfamiliarity, domestication of the source language and exegetical footnotes should be added to bring the message home to the target language audience (Abdul-Raof 2005:172). For theological expressions the source language word should always be translated according to one's cultural, socio-political, and ethical perception (Abdu-Raof 2005:166). This will be evident in the translation of the theological term *Allah* into *Qamata* in the target language. The researcher suggests that if a theological term or expression is translated according to Abdul-Raof (2005:166), footnotes should be added as explication to the target language readers. In a footnote the word *Qamata* e.g should be explained as a name in isiXhosa which refers to *Allah*. This is necessary since people in general tend to think that if the word *Allah* or *Qamata* is used, these theological terms differ in terms of referring to God. IsiXhosa speaking Muslims are now using the term *Allah* and as time goes by, some might think that the term *Qamata* means someone else or that it shows inferiority of isiXhosa to Arabic.

The Arabic Qur'an has some geographical facts in it and as a result some geographical names alien to the target language readers need to be explained in footnotes (Abdul-Raof 2001:145). Abdul-Raof (2001:146) further suggests that should these geographical names have religious connotations the target text can be provided with an extended commentary about these names. Since the revelation of the Qur'an was in the Arab peninsula where it is common to have deserts, sometimes words like 'mirage' can be found in the Qur'an. Since the target reader is not necessarily familiar with this, it is suggested when translating this term a separate explanatory footnote to make the target text more intelligible should be added. The suggestion by Abdul-Raof (2001:146) is that the event should be kept foreign in the text and explained in the footnotes for those who have never experienced or seen it. The researcher suggests that a "mirage" is sometimes caused by hallucinations; therefore, it does not necessarily only happen in a desert and the target reader might be familiar with the term 'mirage' once translated from Arabic into isiXhosa. The term "mirage" in isiXhosa has as many as three translation equivalents in isiXhosa. The first is a noun *isanga* and figuratively, "mirage" can be translated as *ithemba eliyinkohliso* or *inkohliso* (Fischer et al 1985:383). Therefore, a translator must be able to understand in what context the word is used in order to convey the intended message.



The researcher suggests that the preferred strategy between formal and functional equivalence, should be functional equivalence. The reason for this is that functional equivalence allows the target reader to understand the translated text the same way that the source reader understood it (de Waard & Nida 1986:36). As, for Muslims, the Qur'an is the "word of God to all mankind" the message carried in the text should be understood and produce the same effect. A translation of functional equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his/her own culture (Schäffner 2007:4). Functional equivalence can be linked to Newmark's communicative translation as this form of translation is likely to be smoother, simpler, clearer, more direct, more conventional and conforming to a particular register of language (Newmark 1981:39).

The translation strategies of domestication and foreignisation can both be used in translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa. Domestication is defined as making strangeness understandable and to help the reader gain both access to the other culture and see the analogies with their own situation more clearly (Nord 2001:195). The researcher would like to suggest that translation itself is a process of domestication as it requires that a particular language should be translated into a certain language so as to make it possible for the target reader to acquire the message in that particular language. For example, domestication can be used for translating theological names in the Qur'an such as the term *Allah* that is domesticated into *Qamata*. The reason is that God is not foreign to the target audience because the target audience has believed in God since before they came in contact with either Christianity or Islam, hence the use of the term *Qamata*.

Foreignisation can mostly be used when a translator encounters geographical facts in the Qur'an, for instance where source language geographical names are alien to the target language but can be explained in a footnote (Abdul-Raof 2001:144). Whether to keep the geographical terms foreign will depend on the context of the chapter of the Qur'an. It must be noted that when the Qur'an was delivered to Prophet Muhammad, it was addressing different contexts and events. As Muslims are encouraged to study the history of Islam, it is probable that the target reader will not find foreign geographical names confusing and explanations of the foreign geographical terms will be provided in footnotes.

However, when a translator encounters an item from the Arabic culture, foreign to the target reader, the researcher recommends using cultural transposition rather than foreignising the



item. This allows one to transfer the underlying connotative, cultural or emotive associations of the source text to the target text culture (Abdul-Raof 2005:165).

The other translation approaches suggested were that of functionalist and the skopos theory. Schäffner (2007:6) notes that in a functionalist approach, the first step in each translating activity is the analysis of the specific translation assignment, followed by a translation-oriented analysis of the source text. The functionalist approach rejects the perception of translation as meaning transfer (as commonly found in the linguistic approaches, and also repeatedly in text-linguistic approaches) as being too narrow (Schäffner & Wiesemann 2001:14).

Thus, it is necessary for the translator to identify why the Qur'an should be translated. A translator has to know the "purpose" of translating the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa, which in this case, would serve as a guide to Muslims because it is a message from *Allah* on how Muslims should conduct themselves. This message will only be accessible if the isiXhosa-speakers understand the guidelines as stipulated in the Qur'an. Therefore it is suggested that the skopos theory should also be used, as Vermeer (2000:221) defines skopos as a technical term for the aim or purpose of a translation which translational action leads to a "target text".

The researcher adds that from the available approaches formal equivalence and semantic translation are the least favoured options, mostly because the message and not necessarily the meaning of the Qur'an being a holy text must be transferred. Whether the Qur'an can be translated at all is discussed in the section below.

### **5.3.4 Translatability of the Qur'an**

Debates about translatability primarily concern the question about whether translation from one language into another is at all possible, or if possible, in what sense or to what degree. (Hermans 2009:300). Ricci (2011:153) is of the opinion that the significance of Arabic for Muslim individuals and societies cannot be overstated and that the language of the Prophet (Arabic) and the divine Qur'anic revelation, hold the unique status of sacred language and in its Qur'anic form, is considered untranslatable. Abdul-Raof (2005:162) notes that there is a belief among some Muslim scholars that the Arabic Qur'an cannot be translated into other languages since it is a linguistic miracle with transcendental meanings that cannot be captured fully by human faculties.

Languages are embedded in the cultural environment of which they are a constitutive part and this reciprocity between language and culture, and the asymmetries between different life-worlds, which are also language-worlds, can make translation impossible (Hermans 2009:301). Untranslatability mostly appears in relative form, as a matter of aspect, kind or degree (Hermans 2009:302), in other words, something is not totally translatable. For example, the fifth interviewee pointed out that in Arabic, words like *alif*, *laam*, *meem* are untranslatable “because as much as they appear as text, they are just Arabic letters.” Abdul-Raof (2001: 168 - 9) refers to these as cryptic letters and that their true meaning is known only to God. Abdul-Raof suggests that when dealing with these in translation, footnotes explaining that these letters indicate mystic words should be used. Ricci (2011:166) observes that it may well be that certain terms remain untranslated because they are so deeply embedded in a particular historical and cultural event that their mention arouses an entire set of images and reactions that would no longer be accessible in translation.

The notion of “untranslatability” operates on two distinct levels – the aesthetico-linguistic and the religio-philosophical – but at the heart of both arguments lies the question of fidelity and by extension in the case of religious scripture, faithfulness to God (Abdul-Raof 2001:61). All the above being said, the questions remain: Is there something called “untranslatability”? In what sense is a text untranslatable?

In response to these questions, Abdul-Raof (2001:1) states that no study from the linguistic and applied translation studies perspective is currently available that accounts for the problem of “untranslatability” of the Qur’an. In fact, he continues, this problem has always been dealt with from theological and historical points of views. Hermans (2009:300) mentions that complete “untranslatability” would be beyond words, as it would imply the impossibility of communication or even semiosis. A divine text must overcome the natural restrictions of the language of human communication and it must be realised that those who argue that the Qur’an cannot be translated believe that there is a compulsory correlation between Arabic and the message itself (Wadud-Muhsin 1992:7). The Prophet sent messages to various political rulers, such as the Viceroy of Egypt, urging them to adopt the new religion which was Islam (Baker & Hanna 2009:329). Baker and Hanna further point out that the type of exchange between the Prophet and the political rulers which were non-Arab could not have taken place without some form of linguistic mediation. Therefore, it is suggested that in principle, there is no objection to translating the Qur’an, provided that such translation

as may be produced, is seen as a translation of the ‘meanings’ of the book, that is, a paraphrase or basic interpretation thereof (Mustapha 2009:227).

Although many people feel the Qur’anic Arabic is untranslatable, the Qur’an itself includes many words borrowed from Greek, Persian, Syrian and Hebrew (Baker & Hanna 2009:329). Abdul-Raof (2001:40) alludes to this by suggesting that Muslim scholars allow exegetical translation which is based on commentary and explication of the Qur’anic text. He (Abdul-Raof) (2001: 61) argues against the notion of “untranslatability” and suggests that there is no word which is translation-resistant and this is what untranslatable means. Nida (1994:148) is of the opinion that the translation of religious texts can be a good testing ground for the limits of translatability.

These statements suggest that the Arabic Qur’an is not untranslatable however its translation cannot be regarded as the “Qur’an” but should rather be seen as the “interpretation of the meanings of the Qur’an.”

### **5.3.5 Reason for translating the Qur’an**

Translators are usually the first theologians in any language or community (Mojola 2002:202). Abdul-Raof (2005:162) further points out that the message of the Qur’an cannot be disseminated without translating its language and culture to other languages and cultures. It is suggested that any cultural contact, ‘interference’, or exchange, requires translation, particularly in the area of what each culture holds as sacred or holy (Long 2005:1).

Circulating translated materials played a major role in the spread of Islam (Ricci 2011:31). This then suggests that since the Qur’an is the guide to Muslims and for it to be understood by Muslims and for Islam to spread, the Qur’an should be in the language Muslims speak and understand. This is exactly the case with the target audience of this study, because in order for them to be able to understand the message carried in the Qur’an isiXhosa-speaking Muslims should do so in their native language.

The reason why there is an Arabic Qur’an is that the Prophet Muhammad was an Arab and therefore Arabic is regarded as the language of the Prophet and the divine Qur’anic revelation (Ricci 2011:153). The fact that the Arabic Qur’an was delivered orally and that it was recited, but later on written down as a holy text, suggests that the movement of the sacred word were

also the movements of translation (Long 2005:13). It is further suggested that, as with the above “conversation”, religious conversion gave rise to translation endeavours and that the products of these in turn encouraged further conversion (Ricci 2011:188). This is evident in the target audience because Islam is a religion that was recently introduced to them. It follows that the whole purpose of translating the Qur’an is that people should understand the message since the Qur’an is a message to all humankind (Abdul-Raof 2001:182-183).

The translation of the Qur’an is seen as a major and positive contribution to humankind and a magnificent promotion to cross-cultural understanding (Abdul-Raof 2001:179). This therefore, suggests that it is feasible to translate the Arabic Qur’an into isiXhosa as part of the message being delivered to all humankind. The next issue to be addressed is the translation model.

#### **5.4 Translation models from Arabic into isiXhosa**

Translation never occurs in a vacuum and there is always a reason why translation should take place, and the reasons for translation are usually independent of the reasons for the creation of a source text (Walker, Kruger & Andrews 1995:106). The authors (Walker, Kruger & Andrews 1995:105) further note that translators do not only need an excellent knowledge of the source language, but also good subject knowledge and the ability to manipulate the target language for a specific readership. This is clearly the case in the two translations models dealt with in the section below. The *Surah* (*Surah An-Nas*) is chosen because it is a prayer used in asking for protection against the devil.

##### **5.4.1 The layperson translation of *Surah An-Nas***

As already been pointed out, this translation will seek to accommodate people who are target language speakers but who are not highly qualified academically. This translation will also accommodate people who want to read the Qur’an for the message and not to analyse it theologically. Before translating the chapter, an overview of the chapter is given and the Arabic version is provided. The two isiXhosa translations are then compared in detail.

*Surah An-Nas* is a *surah* that seeks protection from Satan. It is the 114th and last *surah* of the Qur’an. It includes three increasingly powerful titles of God as “the Lord of Men,” “the King of Men,” and finally “the God of Men.” In this *surah*, God is contrasted with Satan and Satan is referred to as a “whisperer of evils into the breasts of jinn and men.”

*Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim*

- 1. Qul a'uudhi bi rabbin naas*
- 2. Malikin naas*
- 3. Ilaahin naas*
- 4. Min sharri wawaasil khannas*
- 5. Alladhee yuwaswisu fee suduurin naas*
- 6. Minal Jinnati wa naas*

**Layperson translation:**

Egameni likaQamata OneNceba nonoBulungisa

1. Ndiphephela kwiNkosi yabantu.
2. UKumkani wabantu.
3. UQamata wabantu.
4. Ndibe kude nentle bendwane esetyezwa ngumtyholi obuya ajike.
5. Othiyela iintliziyo zabantu.
6. Ezemimoya nezabantu.

Below, is the back translation of the layperson translation into English. It must be noted that the English translation is a word-for-word translation from isiXhosa. The English in this translation can also be read and understood by any isiXhosa with a basic knowledge of English:

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

1. I find refuge in the Lord of the people.
2. The king of people.
3. God of the people.
4. To be protected against the gossip whispered by the devil who then turns away.
5. Who traps the hearts of people.
6. The hearts of the supernatural and the people.

The layperson translation can be used by a person who does not have any linguistic background and/or linguistic knowledge of the target language. It is also designed to be used by target language readers who are not Muslims. In this translation the functionalist approach was used with the purpose/function of the translation for a layperson to understand the

message of the *surah*. In terms of the functionalist approach translation is considered to be a communicative interaction between individuals (Nord 2001:187). The translation is straightforward in the sense that the reader does not need to understand the meaning of a lexical term as the term used in the translation can be read and understood by any person who can read and understand the target language. For instance, as this is suggested to be a “prayer seeking refuge away from evil”, the word *kwinkohlakalo* is understood to be the words associated with evil in the target language. This word is qualified by the use of the possessive noun *kasathana*, which qualifies the fact that the evil is from the devil and from nowhere/nobody else.

The three “powerful titles” of God, have their first letters written in capital letters. This is according to the grammatical rule of the target language and also culturally, a sign of respect to God. However, *kasathana*, the name of the devil, is written in small letters because of the fact that believers are always encouraged to look down upon evil deeds associated with the devil.

#### 5.4.2 The academic translation of *Surah An-Nas*:

Egameni likaQamata OneNceba nonoBulungisa

1. Ndikhangela ukhuseleko kwiNkosi yabantu.
2. UKumkani wabantu.
3. UQamata wabantu.
4. Kwinkohlakalo kasathana otyala inkohlakalo ze abuye umva.
5. Oyityala kwiintliziyo zabantu.
6. Kwiintliziyo zezidalwa ezingabonakaliyo nezabantu

Below is the back translation into English where word-for-word translation from the isiXhosa was applied.

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

1. I am looking for protection from the Lord of people.
2. The King of people.
3. God of the people.
4. From the cruelty of the devil who sows cruelty and retreats.
5. That he sows in the hearts of people.

## 6. In the hearts of unseen creatures and people.

The academic translation of the *surah* is translated on a higher level than the layperson translation because the target reader will be able to analyse each and every lexical item. For instance the term *ndiphephela* carries a surface and a deeper meaning. The surface meaning is to “literally hide” whereas the deeper meaning would suggest to “be protected by God”. The word can also suggest “to duck” which can be a temporal thing. Therefore, the use of the word will require analysis in order to understand the context of the text and the message entailed.

In the fourth verse of the academic translation, the word *nentlebwane* is used. This word when translated literally means “gossip”. However, the researcher would like to suggest that in the context of a holy text the term may be analysed to mean “evilness generated by the devil”. Again, this requires analysis so that the term is not understood in its literal meaning but in its figurative meaning.

When comparing the two translations, the researcher wishes to suggest that verses 1, 4, 5 and 6 differ from each other. The difference is in the selection of words used but not from the message they carry across. As already discussed, the layperson translation is for any person who do not have the linguistic background of the target language, be that reader a Muslim or not. However, the layperson translation can also be read and understood by the academic who seeks to analyse the translated Qur’an.

With the above being said, it is suggested that the functionalist approach used in the translations is pragmatic in that it proceeds from the view that translation does not occur in a vacuum and that the prospective target reader is kept in mind throughout. Therefore the chapters/*surahs* were translated differently to address different contexts and different readerships.

### 5.4.3 Ali’s translation of *Surah An-Nas* in English

This translation is given for reference purposes only and is used to highlight the differences in Arabic, English and isiXhosa. The translation is provided below and is followed by a discussion and comparison of the *Surah*.

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

1. Say: I seek refuge with the Lord and Cherisher of Mankind,
2. The King (or Ruler) of Mankind,
3. The God (or judge) of Mankind, -
4. From the mischief of the Whisperer (of Evil), who withdraws (after his whisper), -
5. (The same) who whispers into the hearts of Mankind, -
6. Among Jinns and among Men.

This early *Meccan Surah* is a pendant to the last *Surah* and it concludes the Holy Qur'an with an appeal to believers to trust in God, as sure shield and protection rather than man (Ali 1993:1809). Ali further notes that believers are warned in this *Surah* against the secret whispers of evil within the believers' own hearts.

In the translation above, Ali in other verses except verse 6, always refers to "Mankind". This suggests that the verses are gender sensitive and as a result when translated into isiXhosa, it will be easy for a translator in the target language to also be gender sensitive. In verse 6 of this chapter, the word "Men" is gender specific and as a result suggests gender biasness. It is suggested that the Qur'an acknowledges the anatomical distinction between male and female (Wadud-Muhsin 1992:8). This serves as an example why the researcher feels it is not advisable to translate a text from a translation, since there is already "a loss of meaning in translation", translating a translation might lead to a double "loss of meaning". The term "Men" would pose a problem as it would suggest a radical change from being inclusive by using "Mankind" to being exclusive by using a term which indicates gender specificity.

#### 5.4.4 Translation model

This translation example of *Surah Ikhlaas* from Arabic into isiXhosa was done by the researcher. This *Surah* was revealed in Mecca and its subject matter is the oneness of God (Qur'an:1978). The term *Ikhlaas* suggests purity of sincerity or faith. This example is done to show how the Arabic Qur'an could be translated into isiXhosa. In this example the verses are numbered from one up to five. Beneath each Arabic verse, a translation of that verse in isiXhosa is given. As this is only an example, the researcher would like to suggest that the



strategies used here do not need to be used throughout the translation of the entire Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa.

*Bismillahir – Rahmanir – Rahim*

Egameni likaQamatha OneNceba nonoBulungisa

1. *Qul Huwa Llahu Ahad*

Yithi Nguye uQamata kuphela

2. *Allah<sup>3</sup>u Swamad*

UQamata Ongaxhomekekanga

3. *Lam Yalid Walam Yulad*

Akazelanga kwaye Engazalwanga

4. *Walam Yakul Lahu; Kufwan Ahad*

Kwaye akukho namnye onok'faniswa Naye

An English word-for-word translation of the above verse is indicated below:

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

1. Say it is Him God only
2. God who is not dependent
3. Never gave birth and not born
4. And there is no one that can be likened to Him

The translation of this *Surah* kept the form of the source text and therefore, as suggested by de Waard and Nida (1986:11), there is formal equivalence. The rhythm when reciting the *Surah* whether in Arabic or isiXhosa is equivalent. The researcher would like to suggest that functional equivalence is used in this translation example. De Waard and Nida (1986:36) state that the receptors of a translation should comprehend the translated text to such an

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<sup>3</sup> The Arabic term Allah is translated as Qamata in isiXhosa to avoid foreignising God for the target reader.

extent that they can understand how the original receptors must have understood the original text.

A strategy of domestication was also used in translating the *Surah*. This is seen in the use of the word *Qamata* instead of loaning the word *Allah* in the translation. A footnote is then given to explain why such a word is used in the translation. A detailed discussion of this translation follows.

## 5.5 Annotation of the translation model

Each *Surah* in the Qur'an is opened by saying *Bismillahir- Rahmanir – Rahim* and therefore this is not counted as a verse within the *Surah* except in *Surah Al Fatihah* referred to in Chapters 3 and 4 of the study. In doing this translation example, the researcher was faced with many challenges. The main challenge was that of trying to keep to the rhythm of the Arabic Qur'an in the target text and at the same trying to convey the exact message in the Arabic Qur'an. The translation problems will be categorised into four main types: pragmatic, intercultural, interlingual and textual, and will be discussed in the sub-paragraphs below.

### 5.5.1 Pragmatic and intercultural translation problems

These problems arise as a result of a contrast between the source text situation and the target text communicative situation and include inter alia culture-bound terms and addressee-specifications (Schäffner & Wieseemann 2001:32). In verse 1 the word *Qul* is translated as *Yithi*. The translation brings across a command and since the Qur'an is read by both the old and the young, it is a sign of respect to an elder to always have a form of address as a prefix or suffix, for instance *Tata Yithi* or *Yithi tata*<sup>4</sup>. But because it was already stated that the Qur'an is the word of God and that it carries a universal message to all humankind (Abdul-Raof 2005: 162), the command is given by God and therefore, regardless of age, the target reader of the Qur'an is a child in God's eyes.

Thus the translation of *Qul* as *Yithi* has captured the message of the source language correctly and also suggests that there is no problem of addressee-specifications as the command *Yithi* refers to anyone and everyone who is a Muslim. The researcher would like to suggest that the

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<sup>4</sup> The isiXhosa community uses the term to refer to an elderly male or a male who is older in terms of age by addressing him as such, hence it is important to have the term. It must be noted that this does not suggest the fact that the researcher is giving gender to Allah by using the term. It is only used as an example.

word *Allah*, as much as it has a religious connotation, is a culture-bound term because culture works hand in hand with the language of that particular culture. This is also suggested by the functionalist approach that no clear line can be drawn between language and culture (Schäffner & Wieseemann 2001:38).

It follows that culture-specific terms frequently pose translation problems since the target readers cannot always be supposed to be fully familiar with the source language and its cultural implications (Schäffner & Wieseemann 2001:33). These problems arise from differences in conventions between the two cultures involved and therefore cultural filtering will apply as well (Schäffner & Wieseemann 2001:36).

In verse 1 *Llahu* and in verse 2 *Allahu* are forms of address which refer to God. They are translated in isiXhosa using one form of address which is *Qamata*. This is so because the two terms are referring to *Allah* but are written differently because of the different forms of syntax of both verses in Arabic. In isiXhosa it does not change as a result of the fact that in the target language there are no grammatical articles. Therefore, it is appropriate to translate the words as *Qamata*. The researcher would like to bring to attention the fact that when the term *Allah* is translated as a single item, its translation in isiXhosa is *Qamata*. However, if the term is translated in a sentence, the context of the sentence determines a subject concord to be attached to the term *Qamata*. For example, if a sentence refers to *Allah*, a subject concord *-u* would be prefixed to *Qamata*.

Qur'anic discourse provides numerous examples of linguistic untranslatability because of the different linguistic mechanisms of the source language and the target language which means that the source language linguistic requirements cannot be accommodated by the target language linguistic norms (Abdul-Raof 2005:170). Should this be encountered, the context of the text should be taken into consideration so that the intentionality of the source language message is relayed to the target language reader (Abdul-Raof 2005:170). For instance, in the Arabic greeting used by Muslims, *salaam alaikum*, means "peace be upon you," the first part of the greeting has two nouns which are *slaaman* (peace) in the accusative case and *slaamun* (peace) in the nominative (Abdul-Raof 2005:170). When the greeting is translated into the target language, it reads *uxolo malube nawe*, and when translated into English is, "peace be upon you." In the target language, even though it is a greeting used by fellow Muslims to wish each other tranquillity, the word *uxolo* may also be used to ask for forgiveness. A translator must be aware that the greeting is not for greeting purposes only but also to wish

others a peaceful, healthy life. In a case like this, Abdul-Raof (2005:171) suggests that domestication being a cultural transposition approach, should be adopted.

### 5.5.2 Interlingual translation problems

Interlingual translation problems usually occur as a result of structural differences in the vocabulary and syntax of the two languages. This means that the problems are more specifically related to the linguistic systems of the source language and the target language (Schäffner & Wiesemann 2001:38).

In verse 4, because of the vocabulary and the syntax in Arabic, the word *Lahu* is written differently as compared to *Llahu* in verse 1. This is because the word before *Lahu* in verse 4 *Yakul* ends with an *L* whereas in verse 1 it is not the case. This has resulted in the target language having a different translation. Instead of using a proper noun, a qualificative pronoun *Naye* is used to refer to *Allah*. Also in verse 4, the grammatical connotation of the use of an apostrophe in the word *onok'faniswa* is used deliberately. In isiXhosa it is acceptable to do what is called *izimeli-nobumba* as it suggests that a vowel is being left out (Pahl & Dazana 1968:67). Here it was done to keep the required rhythm of the Qur'an during recital. To keep the "rhythm" in the translation of the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa was a concern raised by Sithotho (Sesanti 2009:52).

In verse 3, *Lam Yalid* is translated as *Akazelanga* and *Walam Yulad* is translated as *kwaye Engazalwanga*. In an Arabic grammar, the word *Wa* – is translated as *and* in English. However, in isiXhosa its translation depends on the syntax of the language. In this verse *Wa* is translated as *kwaye* instead of *no-*. *Lam Yalid* is a negative form that qualifies the fact that *Allah* does not have a child by birth which is translated as *Akazelanga* but the second part – *lam Yulad* suggests that *Allah* is not begotten and translated as *Engazalwanga*. The translation of this verse in isiXhosa would have been *Ongazelanga nongazelwanga*, but because *Allah* never gave birth and was never born was emphasised and because the rhythm of the verse had to be kept, this verse was translated as *Akazelanga kwaye Engazalwanga*. To (re)create a specific effect in the text one must be creative (Schäffner & Wiesemann 2001: 41–2).

As already suggested the source language (Arabic) and the target language (isiXhosa) have linguistic differences. Arabic is an inflectional language; it has three major inflectional cases, namely, the nominative, accusative and genitive, one of which accompanies the noun (Abdul-

Raof 2005:170). Linguistic norms are different from one language to another therefore texture is different among languages too (Abdul-Raof 2001:109). Linguistically, texture is realised through cohesive elements which make the text hang together, both syntactically and semantically (Abdul-Raof 2001:107). This would be possible to achieve when translating into the target language. That is why prior knowledge of the individual reader, the language and the cultural context in which the text is read is so important (Wadud-Muhsin 1992:5).

### 5.5.3 Text-specific translation problems

These problems arise in the translation of one specific text and cannot be generalised (Schäffner & Wiesemann 2001:41). For instance, when dealing with a figurative language of the Qur'an during translation, a translator must be aware and cautious thereof and not translate the term literally. When dealing with text-specific problems, the issue of figurative language should be taken into consideration. For instance Ali (1993:343) suggests that the word "shape" that appears in verse 11 of Chapter 7 must be interpreted not only to refer to the physical form, which changes day by day, but also to the various forms and shapes which an ideal and spiritual existence may take from time to time according to inner experience. This indicates that a translator when dealing with such figurative words should avoid translating those words literally. Wadud-Muhsin (1992:6) notes that Arabic is a gender-specific language and that this distinction becomes apparent in the interpretation of the text and the conclusions drawn from the function of the text with regard to gender. It must be noted that the target language, isiXhosa is not gender specific only when a pronoun is used with a noun would that be specific to which gender it refers. The fact that Arabic is gender-specific will not create a problem in translation since there are lexical items in isiXhosa that can be used to make a "gender distinction".

An Arabic Qur'an is written and divided into chapters and each is divided into verses. Each chapter is given a name, for instance, *al-fatihah*, "the Opening"; *al-baqara*, "the Cow" (Mustapha 2009:225). Translating the names given to the chapters of the Qur'an into isiXhosa might at some stages become problematic. For instance *al-fatihah* would be translated as *Ukuvula* which means "the Opening". However, the same cannot be said for *al-baqara* since if the name were directly translated it would be *inkomo*. This is because the context of the chapter has nothing to do with a cow. The name of the chapter is from the *Parable of the Heifer* which illustrates the insufficiency of carping obedience and it suggests

that when faith is lost, people put off obedience with various excuses and that they fail in the spirit to see that they are not alive but dead (Ali 1983:16).

Thus, to be able to overcome a text-specific problem such as a name of a verse, the translator must know the context of the verse before translating the verse and giving a specific translation of a name of a verse. This is supported by Wadud-Muhsin (1992:78) when she notes that the Qur'an responded to particular circumstances in Arabia. The verses of the Qur'an are written in a certain form and this poses a challenge. However, it is seen as a challenge rather than a problem since in the target language, a poem would be written in the same format. It must also be noted that the Qur'an was meant for "recital" and "reciting" something that is not foreign to the target audience as the target language culture use praise singers, referred to as *iimbongi*, who recite their praise or write them down.

It is clear that the target language is familiar with rhyme, rhythm and metre but this in itself may pose a challenge in translating the Qur'an into isiXhosa, however with regard to Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, the text should be approached from the outside and this frees one to make observations which are not imprisoned in the context of the language (Wadud-Muhsin 1992:6).

## 5.6 Concluding remarks and recommendations

Because of the importance the scriptures attach to history in the sense of the uniqueness of God's entrance into history in salvation and deliverance, it is not enough for modern receptors to comprehend the message merely in terms of their own personal experience (Nida 1982: 23). It is agreed that the translation of the Qur'an like all other translations, will inevitably involve loss of meaning but it is suggested that the loss of meaning can be compensated by exegesis (Abdul-Raof 2001:110). What is important in the translation of the Qur'an is for the target reader to get the message of the Qur'an rather than the "meaning". This is also evident in the fact that the Qur'an for the Muslim is the word of God and its theological message transcends the boundaries of the Arab peninsula and carries the universal message to all mankind regardless of their language and race (Abdul-Raof 2005:162).

With this study a conclusion that it is feasible to translate the Qur'an directly from Arabic into isiXhosa was reached. It is a fact that holy text translation is possible because it is happening (Long 2005: 14). This is evident as there are existing translations of the Arabic

Qur'an into other languages, such as English and Kiswahili as has been discussed in the literature review of this study.

In translating the Arabic Qur'an, it is agreed that sameness cannot exist between two languages (Abdul-Raof 2005:171). It is also true that there are many and various motives for translating holy texts (Long 2005:1). For instance, translating the Arabic Qur'an will eliminate the "rumblings" heard by Muslims who do not understand Arabic during prayers and preaching in mosques and elsewhere. The translation will see to it that the message of *Allah* is not limited to a few but reaches "all mankind", including isiXhosa speaking Muslims.

It is important for practitioners to note that the translation of the sensitive Qur'an text into a different language and culture does not always require one to keep the source language text intact regarding linguistic and/or rhetorical constituents of texture; target text linguistic/rhetorical constituents of texture must be employed (Abdul-Raof 2001:110). This means that target language texture has to be governed by target language linguistic and rhetorical norms of texture in order to achieve acceptability, rhetorical stimuli, purposeful communicative interaction, and a response in the target language reader similar to that generated by the source language in its audience (Abdul-Raof 2001:110). This study, therefore, strongly recommends the use of functional equivalence and domestication as the best strategies in the translation of the Qur'an for the isiXhosa reader.

This study also subscribes to and recommends Abdul-Raof's (2001:110) suggestion that target language linguistic norms, some rhetorical features, and cohesive constituents ad hoc to the target text can be negotiated within the target text in a manner that will meet the target language linguistic and rhetorical norms.

Although the researcher strongly recommends that the Arabic Qur'an be translated into isiXhosa as soon as possible, the process should not be rushed. Rushing the translation will result in discrepancies and inconsistencies and will not do justice to such an important task. As was pointed out earlier, such an exercise would require a body of translators who are well-versed in the Arabic language and Arab culture. This body of translators would also have to consist of professionals well-versed in isiXhosa and the culture of isiXhosa-speaking Africans. The translators should not be freelancers working in his/her little corner but should be full time Qur'an translators working in the same room. This would make it easy to consult each other for research purposes and consultations so as to eliminate any discrepancies,

inconsistencies and uncertainties. It is suggested that the project should be a full time project and that it should be financially sound in order to pay the translators and to sustain the project. The translators would be working according to a brief and they should be checking each other's translations for both language and accuracy to the source text. Nevertheless, the final revision of the translation should be done by reading the target text as a free-standing isiXhosa text without referring to the source text.

The Arabic Qur'an must be translated directly into isiXhosa and not via other languages such as English. This is to avoid translating a translation because all translation will inevitably involve loss of meaning (Abdul-Raof 2001:110). The English translated version of the Qur'an has undergone a "loss of meaning" and that would then mean that if the isiXhosa Qur'an is a translation of the English one, there would be a double "loss of meaning". However, reference to other translations of the Qur'an can be made so as to consult and see how certain challenges that arose were tackled. The translation of the Qur'an, like all other acts of translation, will inevitably involve loss of meaning, however loss of meaning can be compensated by exegesis, that has been described as "a kind of running commentary on the product that reveals something of its dynamic unfolding as a process" (Abdul-Raof 2001:110). Footnotes could also be applied for exegesis or explication.

Lastly, the researcher acknowledges the fact that the Qur'an, when translated, cannot carry the name "Qur'an" only but should rather have titles like "The Meaning of the Qur'an" or "The Message of the Qur'an" (Abdul-Raof 2005:162). This is because the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic and therefore having it translated into other languages suggests that there was an interference and that the transcendental meanings cannot be captured fully by man (Abdul-Raof 2005:162). In order for the Qur'an to achieve its objective to act as a catalyst affecting behaviour in the society, each social context must be based upon understanding the fundamental and unchangeable principles of that text, and then implement them in their own unique reflection (Wadud-Muhsin, 1992:5).

## **5.7 Shortcomings of this research**

The study seeks to see if translating the Arabic Qur'an directly into isiXhosa is feasible. For the study interviews were conducted, however, only with people from one township (KwaNobuhle), in the Eastern Cape. The researcher could have conducted interviews in one of the several areas where there are isiXhosa speaking Muslims. This was not done as a result of the fact that isiXhosa has dialects and that in translating the Qur'an into isiXhosa, the



Xhosa dialects should also be looked at. It must also be noted that the number of the interviewees does not represent the majority of the isiXhosa speaking Muslims in the community. Interviews were also only conducted with men and not women; however this is due to a perception that women should not be vocal in issues concerning Islam. Islam is perceived to be male-dominant and this perception is because of a direct result of Arabic cultural influence.

Last but not least, the study concentrated mainly on issues of language and did not pay much attention to culture. In this context, culture refers to a way of life in a particular society. For instance, in the Arab culture a female should cover herself from head to toe. In the Xhosa culture, it is expected of a married woman and not from the young female, to cover herself from head to toe. In this instance the study fell short in explaining how a translator should deal with such cultural issues.

### **5.8 Recommendations for further research**

It is recommended that this research should be done in other provinces and especially in the Western Cape since there are also isiXhosa speaking Muslims. In order to gather statistical data, the research should be in a form of a questionnaire which will allow isiXhosa speaking Muslims to be involved in the research across the board. The test sample should be gender, age and settlement balanced (different locations of people). The study should further establish whether to consider political and cultural issues when translating an Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa.

In conclusion, it is recommended that further research should be conducted before attempting to translate the Arabic Qur'an into isiXhosa. The proposed research must address cultural and political issues that could affect or influence the translation procedure and should be addressed in the event that a translation of the entire Qur'an into isiXhosa is done.

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Addendum A

February 9, 2010. ADDENDUM B  
 A literal Translation of Surah Fatiha  
 (Page 1) direct from Arabic into Isi-Xhosa

① بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1. [Bismilla]hir [Rahma]hir-Rahim  
 [Ngegamalika-Allah] [One Nceba] [Ono Bulungisa]

② الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

2. [Al-hamdulilahi] [Rabil Alamin]  
 [Udumo (Aombulelo) ku-Allah]  
 Umphathi walo lonke elimiweyo

③ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
 Arkahman nrrahim  
 3. Lowo the Nceba lowo-  
 uno Bulungisa

④ مُلِكْ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ

4. [Maliki] [Yawmi Ain]  
 Inkosi Yemini Womgweba

⑤ اِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَاِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِيْنُ

[Iyyaka Nabudela] Wa [Iyyaka Nasta'nc]  
 Nguwe ukdwa Esimkhonzayo Kwaye Nguwe ukdwa  
 esicela kuye Uncedo

ADDENDUMB

(Page 2.)

أَهْدِنَا السِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ⑥

Ihdina Sirat almustaqjima  
Sikhokele Indlela Elungileyo  
(usibonise)

سِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

~~غَيْرِ الذِّينِ~~

غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ

وَالضَّالِّينَ ⑦

Sirat alatheena anAmta alayhim  
Indlela - yabo - wathiWabasikelela

Ghairil maghdubi alayhim Walaa - dholeen  
Hay; .abo - bafumene Inqumbo - abo - balahle - kileyo.  
(Yakho)

## Addendum B

### Word-for-word translation of Surah 1 (Al Fātihah)

1. In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful<sup>19</sup>.  
*Egameni lika-Allah, Kakhulu oZukileyo, Kakhulu oneNceba.*
2. Praise be to Allah  
The Cherisher and Sustainer<sup>20</sup> of the Worlds;  
**Udumo malube ku-Allah**  
**UMlondolozi noMgcini wamaHlabathi;**
3. Most Gracious, Most Merciful;  
**Kakhulu oZukileyo, Kakhulu oneNceba;**
4. Master of the Day of Judgement.  
**Nkosi yoSuku loMgwebo.**
5. Thee do we worship<sup>21</sup>,  
And Thine aid we seek.  
**Wena senza thina ukunqula,**  
**Kwaye Lwakho uncedo thina funa.**
6. Show<sup>22</sup> us the straight way,  
**Bonisa thina ethe tye indlela,**
7. The way of those on whom  
Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace,  
Those whose (portion)  
Is not wrath,  
And who go not astray.  
**Indlela yabo phezu bani**  
**Wena onike Lwakho uZuko,**

**Abo zabo (isabelo)**

**Yiyo hayi ingqumbo,**

**Kwaye abo bahamba hayi lahlekileyo.**

English source: The Holy Qur'an: Text, translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī  
IsiXhosa word-for-word translation by AT Sesanti.



Addendum C

February 9, 2010. ADDENDUM C  
 A literal Translation of Surah Fatihah  
 (Page 1) direct from Arabic into - Isi-Xhosa

① بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1. [Bismilla]hir [Rahma]hir [Rahim]  
 [Ngegamalika-Allah] [One Nceba] [Ono Bulungisa]

② الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

2. [Al-hamdulilahi] [Rabil Alamin]  
 [Udumo (Ambulelo) ku-Allah]  
 Umphathi Walo lonke elimiweyo

③ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
 3. [Ar-Rahman nir-Rahim]  
 Lowo uye Nceba lowo-  
 uno Bulungisa

④ مُلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

4. [Maliki] [Yawmi Ain]  
 Inkosi Yemini Womgweba

⑤ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

[Iyyaka Nabudela] Wa [Iyyaka Nasta'ina]  
 Nguwe uedwa Esimkhonzayo Kwaye Nguwe uedwa  
 esicela kuye Uncedo

# ADDENDUM C

(Page 2.)

٦ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

Ihdina Sirat almustaqima  
Sikhokele Indlela Elungileyo  
(usibonise)

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

~~غَيْرِ الَّذِينَ~~

غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ

وَالضَّالِّينَ ٧

Sirat alatheena anAmta alayhim  
Indlela - Yabo - wathiWabasikelela

Ghaimil maghdubi alayhim Walaa-dholeen  
Hay; abo-bafumene Inggumbo - abo-balahle-kileyo.  
(Yakho)



## Addendum D

Islam Ahmadiya (by) ADDENDUM D

IIVESI EZIKHETHIWEJO ZE-QUR'AN ENGAWELE  
SELECTED VERSES OF THE HOLY QUR'AN IN XHOSA  
Published by : THE AHMADIYA MUSLIM MISSION.  
(SOUTH AFRICA) 1989

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/3781916/Selected-Verses-of-the-Holy-Quran-with-Translation-In-Xhosa-by-Islam-Ahmadiya>  
**U-ALLAH - UTHIXO**  
14/03/2011

U-ALLAH - ligama lalowo ungOphezu-konke.  
Kwisi-Arabhu eligama lithi Allah alikhe lisetyenziselwe  
enye into okanye omnye umntu. Amagama athetha  
uThixo kwezinye iilwimi ngamagama acha- zayo kwaye  
ayakwazi ukuba asetyenziswe nakwisininzi, kodwa eli-  
gama lithi Allah alisoze likhe lisetyenziswe kwisininzi.  
Kuthe ke ngokungabikho kwegama lesiXhosa elithetha  
into enye ncaakasana neli lasetyenziswa linjalo apha  
eluguqulelweni.

### AL-FATIHAH : Isahluko 1, iivesi 1-7

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Egameni lika-Allah,<br>uSolufefe, uSozinceba   | بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ   |
| 2. Makabongwe u-Allah,<br>iNkosi yamazwe onke.  | الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ   |
| 3. USolufefe, uSozinceba  | الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  |
| 4. UMongameli woMhla<br>Womgwebo.   | مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ  |
| 5. Nguwe kuphela<br>esimngulayo, ikwanguwe<br>esicela uncedo kuYe.  | إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ  |
| 6. Sikhokelele<br>emendweni olungileyo -  | اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ  |
| 7. Indlela yabo<br>uyibabale ngeemfefe,<br>abo bangayivusanga<br>ingqumbo yaKho, neyabo<br>bangalahlekanga. | صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ |

### AL-HADID : Isahluko 57, iivesi 1-8

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Egameni lika-Allah,<br>uSolufefe, uSozinceba. | بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ |
|--|---------------------------------------|